



Shaping a Progressive Agenda of EU's Development Cooperation

A Critical Examination of NDICI-Global Europe Implementing Acts

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Report submitted by a team of independent European experts set up by



to



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Executive Summary

Introduction. In an era of unprecedented complexity and volume of policy documents, the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) face challenges in efficiently scrutinize the work of the European Commission (EC) in implementing the EU's Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe initiatives. Addressing this need, the Centre for Studies on International Politics (CeSPI) embarked on a groundbreaking analysis, employing a combination of Machine Learning (ML), Artificial Intelligence (AI), and qualitative methodologies to dissect and understand the actions carried out by the EC in partners countries, within the framework of the NDICI, their coherence and alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and priorities of the Socialists and Democrats (S&D) Group in the European Parliament.

The marriage of ML and AI with qualitative analysis presented in this report not only innovates the scrutiny of EU development cooperation policies but also equips MEPs with a robust framework to navigate and assess the effectiveness of NDICI Annual Action Plans (AAPs). This comprehensive methodology paves the way for informed, coherent, and impactful policy-making, aligning the EU's development cooperation with its ambitious progressive priorities and values.

Findings. The study examines a selection of 176 AAPs, which are official documents guiding the EC's actions across 89 countries, and conducts a complementary analysis of actions implemented in five countries: El Salvador, Jordan, Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal. The findings indicate that, although the AAPs profess alignment with progressive SDGs, such as human development, poverty reduction, and gender equality, a detailed review reveals a reduced emphasis on these priorities in the actual initiatives undertaken in partner countries.

This discrepancy raises concerns about the effectiveness of the EC's development programs in fostering human development and addressing poverty and inequalities. Notably, poverty and inequalities are often approached indirectly, sometimes through conservative strategies.

Furthermore, many initiatives primarily concentrate on capacity building and strategy development, predominantly targeting government officials. While this approach may be cost-effective, it is imperative to ensure it translates into tangible benefits for the broader population. There is a significant need for targeted actions, underpinned by detailed planning and precise indicators, to adequately serve the most vulnerable populations, which appears to be lacking in the current approach.

Recommendations.

- i. Review the NDICI – Global Europe targets by specifying policy areas, types of activities, and intended beneficiaries. This is crucial to ensure that actions directly contribute to achieving expected progressive goals and SDGs priorities.
- ii. Enhance coordination and synergies between policies and measures focusing on economic growth or the green transition, especially concerning infrastructure (with specific reference to Global Gateway – GG – initiatives) and human development. This approach aims to maximize the social impact of these interventions.

- iii. Implement a new target within NDICI – Global Europe dedicated to reducing poverty and inequality. Reference the Inequality Marker and allocate adequate resources to perform Distributional Impact Assessments (DIAs), enabling a focused evaluation of how interventions impact various segments of the population, particularly the most vulnerable.
- iv. Collaborate with United Nations agencies, Civil society organizations (CSOs), and media outlets to improve transparency and promote policies based on robust data.
- v. Create a High-Level Panel on Poverty and Inequalities, including representatives from EU institutions (the Council, European Parliament, Commission), as well as experts, CSOs, and delegates from partner countries. This panel aims to deepen the dialogue on sustainable development and the social impacts of EC interventions.
- vi. Encourage research and further studies using text mining (TM) and ML techniques, along with AI, to enhance MEPs ability to scrutinize the EC’s activities effectively.

Abbreviations

AAPs - Annual Action Plans

AD - Amending Decision

AfDB - African Development Bank

AI - Artificial Intelligence

CID - Commission Implementing Decision

CNDC - Consejo Nacional para el Desarrollo Sostenible (National Council for Sustainable Development)

CRS - Creditor Reporting System

CSOs - Civil society organizations

DAC - Development Assistance Committee

DG - Directorate-General

DIAs - Distributional Impact Assessments

DSC - Document de Stratégie Conjointe (Joint Strategy Document)

EC - European Commission

ECA - European Court of Auditors

EFSD+ - European fund for sustainable development plus

EIB - European Investment Bank

ENDI - Estrategia Nacional de Desarrollo Integral (National Integral Development Strategy)

EU - European Union

GG - Global Gateways

IM - Individual Measure

INTPA - International Partnerships EC

IPG - International Partners Group

LDA - Linear Discriminant Analysis

MAP - Multiannual Action Plan

MAV+ - Manufacturing and Access to Vaccines, Medicines and Health Technologies

MEPs - Members of the European Parliament

MIPs - Multi-Annual Indicative Programmes

ML - Machine Learning

NDICI - Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument

NEAR EC - European Neighbourhood and Policy and Enlargement Negotiations

ODA - Official Development Assistance

PADAER - Programme d'appui au Développement Agricole et à l'entrepreneuriat Rural (Agricultural Development and Rural Entrepreneurship Support Programme)

PARIIS - Projet d'Appui régional à l'Initiative pour l'Irrigation au Sahel (Regional Support Project for the Sahel Irrigation Initiative)

PSE - Plan Sénégal Emergent (National Emerging Strategy)

SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals

S&D - Socialists & Democrats

SpM - Special Measure

SuM - Support Measure

TEI - Team Europe Initiative

TM - Text Mining

TVET - Technical and Vocational Education and Training

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

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Shaping a Progressive Agenda of EU's Development Cooperation

A Critical Examination of NDICI-Global Europe Implementing Acts

1. Introduction

EU institutions, specifically the European Commission (EC) and the European Investment Bank (EIB), financed development cooperation interventions between 2006 and 2021, amounting to USD 284.9 billion (constant 2021 prices). According to disaggregated data from the OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS), these institutions implemented 128,007 initiatives¹, involving numerous funds, initiatives, and related documents.

Under the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework, the EU launched the *Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe* (NDICI – Global Europe), allocating €79.46 billion (in current prices)² for cooperation with all third countries, excluding pre-accession beneficiaries and overseas countries and territories. NDICI – Global Europe plans to allocate €60.38 billion for geographic programmes, including at least €19.32 billion for the Neighbourhood (32%), at least €29.18 billion for Sub-Saharan Africa (48.3%), €8.48 billion for Asia and the Pacific (14%), and €3.39 billion for the Americas and the Caribbean (5.6%).

This new instrument merges several former EU external financing instruments, unifying grants, blending and guarantees to support Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Americas and the Caribbean at national and regional level as well as thematic programmes.

The NDICI – Global Europe's cooperation priority areas and specific objectives for partner countries and regions are outlined in Multi-Annual Indicative Programmes (MIPs). These strategic documents detail overall goals and financial allocations of EU interventions. Finally, the Annual Action Plans (AAPs), adopted each year by the EC further detail the implementation of the MIPs in each country.

Each AAP is composed by approximately 2-4 program documents (the EC's decision and the Annexes dedicated to specific projects), detailing the policy areas of the interventions, objectives, expected results, activities, and budget.

¹ <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CRS1>

² https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/neighbourhood-development-and-international-cooperation-instrument-global-europe-ndici-global-europe_en

From November 2021 to mid-March 2024, 332 Action Plans were uploaded to the European Commission's INTPA dedicated portal³. These plans cover 114 partner countries, 4 regions (Americas and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, Overseas Countries and Territories, Sub-Saharan Africa), and 22 topics. In total, over one thousand documents of varying lengths are available for analysis over three years. Additionally, AAPs related to another 10 partner countries, 2 regions, and 1 topic (migration) have been produced within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, which includes the renewed Eastern Partnership and the new Agenda for the Mediterranean⁴.

Such a large amount of documentation risks to be unmanageable by the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), who have the institutional duty to monitor the work of the European Commission.

The aim of this study is precisely to enhance capacities of Socialists & Democrats (S&D) MEPs to undertake an informed and evidence-based scrutiny process of the NDICI – Global Europe, and a productive political dialogue with the European Commission⁵.

To this end, it is essential that MEPs are provided with relevant and organized information about AAPs and activities in the partner countries. In particular, the sectors/policy areas interested by the EC's interventions, the type of interventions carried out, and whether these are aligned with progressive priorities, notably social justice and emphasis on human development and the fight against inequalities and poverty. In doing so, incoherencies can be found that might hinder effectiveness and accountability of EU development cooperation policy.

³ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/action-plans_en

⁴ This reflects a situation where the EC uses only one instrument (NDICI – Global Europe) but follows two different allocation methodologies to Neighbourhood and non-Neighbourhood countries, highlighting in particular the presence of fewer AAPs, information, details and updates regarding neighbourhood countries. https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/neighbourhood-development-and-international-cooperation-instrument-global-europe-ndici-global-europe_en (useful to consult especially the MIPs) and https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/countries_en (useful for consulting AAPs in particular). For example, in the case of Jordan, multi-annual programme documents, annual plans and related annexes are available in the 'Key documents' section and in the 'For specific information (programme level)' section: See: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/jordan_en

⁵ On 7 June 2023, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) published its Special Report No 14/2023 entitled "Programming the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe – Comprehensive programmes with deficiencies in the methods for allocating funds and impact monitoring". It is a document analysing the new instrument that deserves to be mentioned, highlighting deficiencies in the methodologies used for allocating funding to partner countries and in the setup of the monitoring Framework as well as the presence of many indicators, which are specific, but have unclear or missing baselines and targets. See: https://www.eca.europa.eu/ECAPublications/SR-2023-14/SR-2023-14_EN.pdf

2. The methodology

This study analyzes a sample of 176 AAPs carried out by the International Partnerships (INTPA) and the Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (NEAR) directorates, implemented across 89 countries for the period 2021-2023⁶. In total, these plans encompass 568 documents that detail the development cooperation interventions in partner countries.

The methodology for analyzing the AAP documentation consists of two main components:

- I. **Comprehensive Cross-Country Analysis:** This step involves scrutinizing AAP documentation across various countries, regions, and topics. The objectives are twofold: (i) to evaluate both the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and areas of intervention prioritized in key sections of the documents (Summary, Indicative Activities, Objectives, and Expected Results) along with related budget allocations, and (ii) to assess the relevance of progressive priorities, particularly in promoting human development and combating poverty and inequality. This is achieved using a selection of SDG indicators⁷ to identify specific keywords (referred to as “labels”), which are weighted based on budget allocations. These labels serve as analytical tools to dissect policy documents, allowing for the identification of potential internal inconsistencies between the expected goals, actual outputs, the nature of activities undertaken, and the primary target groups.
- II. **Qualitative Analysis of Five Countries:** A detailed analysis is conducted for five countries (El Salvador, Jordan, Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal), focusing on the coherence and detail of AAP commitments within the documents in relation to other strategies. This analysis leverages additional documents provided by the EC, national governments, Civil society organizations (CSOs), and other donors, and incorporates qualitative information from local stakeholders to gain insights into the strategies, allocated resources, and potential impact of the development cooperation interventions. This comprehensive approach provides an in-depth understanding of both internal (NDICI-MIP-AAP) and external coherence (alignment with S&D, national development strategies, and European Global Gateway initiatives priorities) as well as the anticipated impact of AAP implementation in the selected countries.

This analysis employs Text Mining (TM) and Machine Learning (ML) techniques for the comprehensive cross-country analysis and an initial level of synthetic profiling for El Salvador, Jordan, Kenya, and Nigeria, complemented by qualitative country analysis applied to these four countries and Senegal. The use of TM and ML techniques facilitates the processing and analysis of large volumes of unstructured text data, enabling the extraction of insights within the AAP

⁶ The remaining 35 countries of the total 124 for which AAPs are available on the two reference websites are countries whose documents do not have a sufficiently well-standardized structure to be analyzed by Text Mining and Machine Learning Techniques or are not written in English.

⁷ The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development expresses the multi-dimensional ambitions and objectives of the international community for development results, with goals and targets to be reached by 2030; development co-operation aims at achieving results on the ground. Therefore, the links between SDG targets/Indicators and EU ODA results are essential. See: OECD (2021), *Achieving SDG Results in Development Co-operation: Summary for Policy Makers*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

In particular, for the subset of SDG indicators, see: M. Zupi (ed.) (2022) *EU ODA Scrutiny Project. Methodology to assess the coherence between EC documents and S&D Group at European Parliament. CeSPI Report*, June.

documents regarding keywords, themes, or concepts⁸. Additionally, these tools support the visual representation of data and trends through graphs and dashboards, enhancing the accessibility and comprehensibility of complex data for stakeholders.

⁸ Applying Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA) to uncover latent topics within the AAPs is a sophisticated and effective method. It helps in identifying the main themes and subject areas, revealing the underlying topics addressed in the documents. This analysis will be instrumental in understanding the distribution of topics and their corresponding word distributions, aiding in summarizing the main concepts discussed here.

3. Comprehensive cross-country analysis

3.1. Analysis of aggregate budget allocation per region and country income levels

This section presents the distribution of funding for the 2021-2023 period, aggregated by geographic region and the income level of recipient countries as classified by the World Bank. It's important to note that these results do not depict the full scope of European cooperation but should be interpreted as proportional differences among various regions or income categories based on a select sample of Plans or Measures from the same period.

Figure 1 presents the analysis of AAPs, detailing the number of AAPs reviewed, the associated budget, and the recipient countries.

Fig. 1 – Distribution of scanned number of Plans and corresponding total EC Budget Allocation [Billions €] and Recipient Countries per year – Scanned Plans sample, 2021-2023

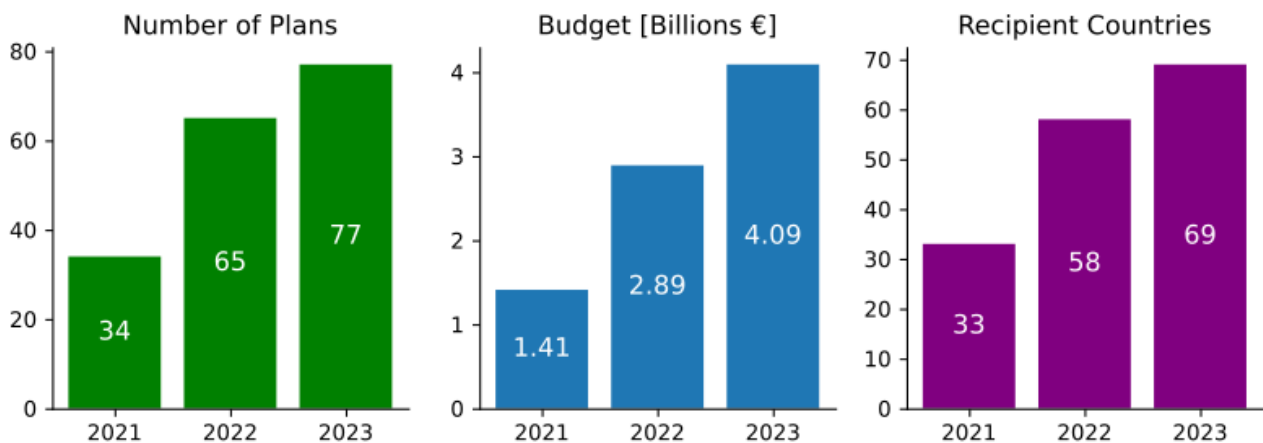


Figure 2 displays the EC's funding distribution across different regions for the entire 2021-2023 period⁹, revealing priority trends in the geographical direction of the EC's development aid.

⁹ The analysis includes both Commission Implementing Decision (CID) documents and their corresponding Annexes. CIDs provide the total funding for each Plan or Measure, aligning with the budget items specified in the Annexes.

Fig. 2 – Distribution of total EC Budget Allocation by region [Billions € and %] – Scanned Plans sample, 2021-2023

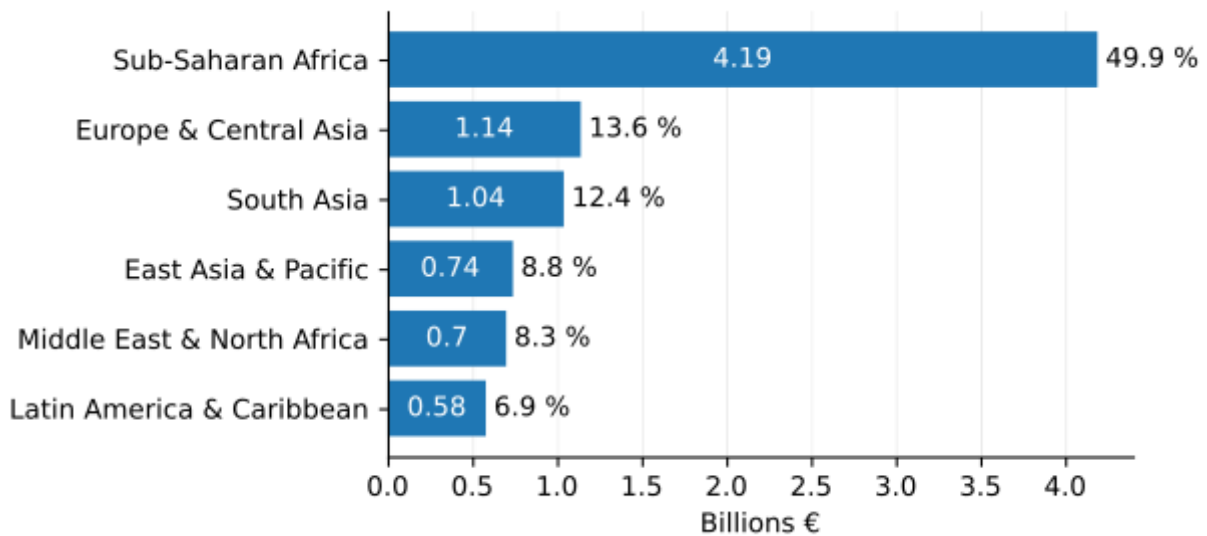
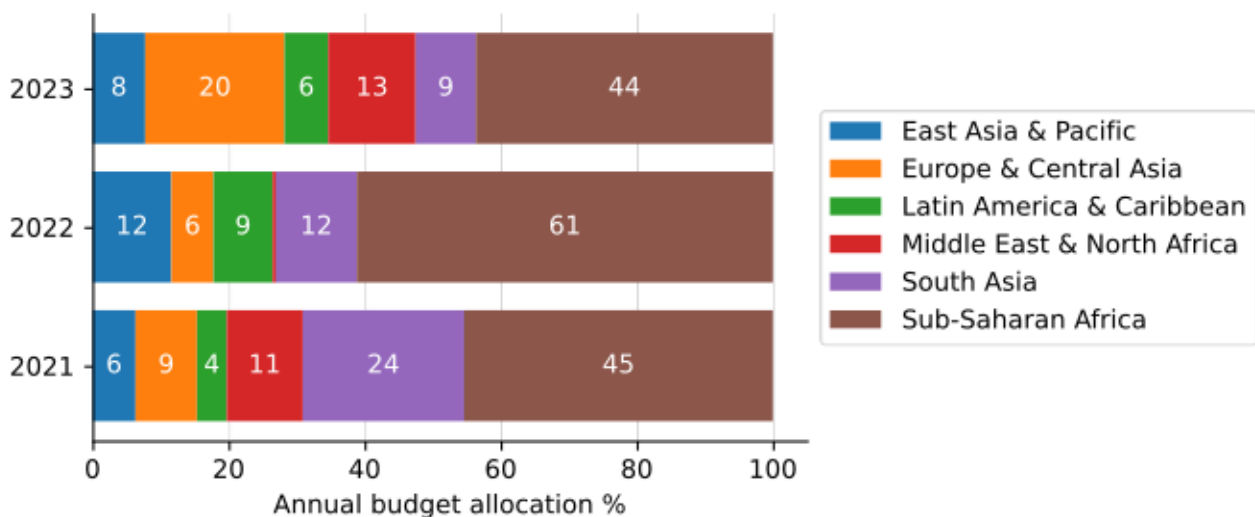


Figure 3 shows the annual distribution of funding across the regions for 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Fig. 3 – Distribution of annual EC Budget Allocation by Region [annual % share] – Scanned Plans sample, 2021-2023

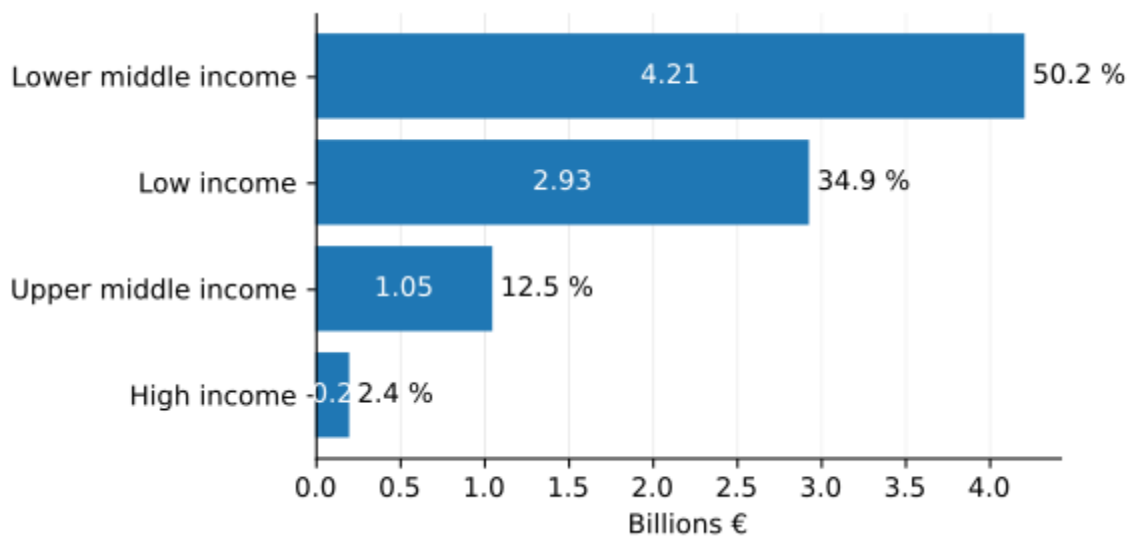


Notably, Sub-Saharan Africa received approximately 50% of the financing, with its annual share fluctuating between 44 and 61%, indicating a significant increase in 2022. Other macro-regions were allocated between 7 and 14% of the total funding, with variations in their annual shares. The “Middle East & North Africa” region, in particular, showed an insignificant share in 2022. It’s important to note, however, that the majority of programs in this region are managed by other EC Directorates-General (DGs) and through different funding channels. Conversely, a growing trend in aid directed towards Europe and Central Asia was observed, alongside a decrease in funding to the

South Asia region. Latin America and the Caribbean was the least funded region both overall and annually.

At the country level, significant variances in individual AAP allocations emerge: Ukraine received the highest budget allocation (€585 million)¹⁰, followed by Afghanistan and Nigeria, each exceeding the €400 million mark. The majority of country-specific AAPs fell below the €100 million threshold, with the lowest allocations for Fiji, Mauritius, and Seychelles (around €600,000 each).

Fig. 4 – Distribution of total EC Budget Allocation per income level of countries [Billions € and %] – Scanned Plans sample, 2021-2023



Regarding the budget allocation per country relative to income level, EC Official Development Assistance (ODA) primarily favored lower middle-income and low-income countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa¹¹. The predominance of lower middle-income countries is attributed to their larger number (54 countries with a population of 3.2 billion) compared to 26 low-income countries (with a population of 700 million).

¹⁰ It should be noted that, in supporting Ukraine in the face of Russia’s war of aggression, in 2023, the EU budget has enabled a total of Eur 19.5 billion in assistance to Ukraine, including an unprecedented support package of €18 billion in concessional loans, the largest macro-financial assistance operation in the history of the instrument. This was on top of €11.6 billion provided in loans and grants in 2022. These funds include the European fund for sustainable development plus (EFSD+), the financial arm of ‘Global Europe’ involving guarantees and blending and aiming at leveraging private sector funds to contribute to its global ambitions (Global Gateway, the EU Green Deal and others).

¹¹ Data refers to 2024 fiscal year. Using the World Bank Atlas method, there are 26 low-income countries (\$1,135 or less), 54 lower middle-income countries (\$1,136 to \$4,465), 54 upper middle-income countries (\$4,466 to \$13,845) and 83 high-income countries (\$13,846 or more), the graph 4 illustrates the funding allocation by the EU to groups of countries, categorized in relation to their per capita income levels.

3.2. Expected contribution of interventions to achieve SDGs

The analysis of the EC's scanned AAPs, employing the frequency of specific keywords, provides an initial insight into the priorities of development cooperation interventions. A primary objective is to evaluate the extent to which these interventions are expected to contribute to achieving the SDGs.

Each AAP Annex document features a section listing the SDGs targeted by the program. This section distinguishes between primary or main SDGs (one per Action), which indicate a higher level of contribution, and secondary or other significant SDGs (up to nine, including specific targets where applicable)¹².

Figure 5 illustrates the expected primary contribution to SDGs, measured by the frequency each SDG is mentioned in the AAP Annexes.

In terms of funding, "No Poverty" (SDG 1), "Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions" (SDG 16), and "Quality Education" (SDG 4) represent the three most funded goals, accounting for over 50% of the budget allocation in the analyzed plans for the 2021-2023 period. In terms of the number of mentions, "Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions" (SDG 16) ranks as the second most frequently cited SDG, after "Partnerships for the Goals" (SDG 17), with both receiving approximately double the mentions of any other goal. This pattern suggests a significant focus on areas identified as progressive priorities, especially in poverty reduction and education. The emphasis on secondary SDGs further highlights this trend, with goals such as SDG 1 (Eradicating Poverty) and notably, SDG 5 (Gender Equality), standing out prominently.

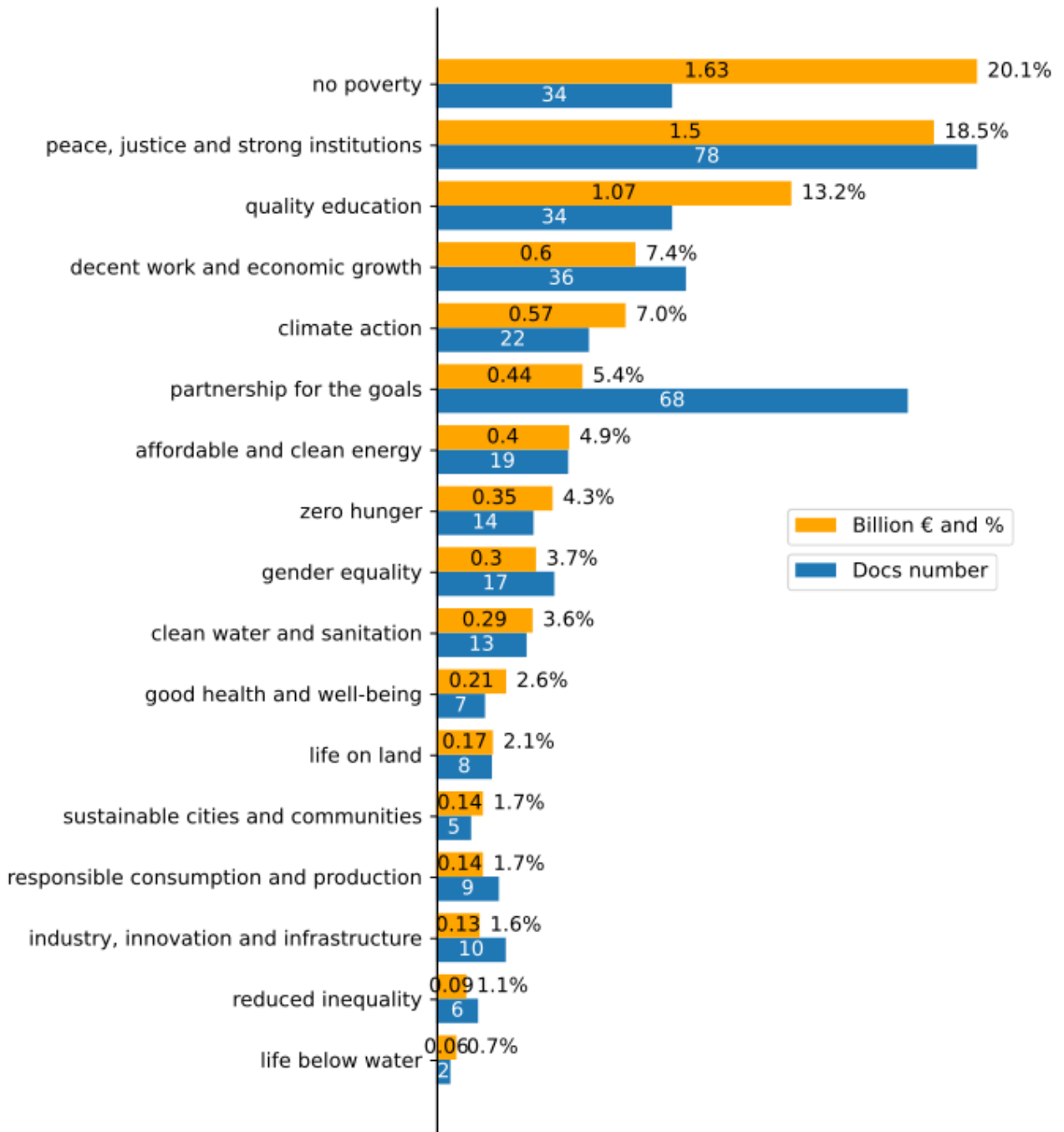
¹² The differentiation between main and significant SDGs allows for a nuanced understanding of how EC's financial assistance and interventions are expected to contribute to the global agenda for sustainable development, reflecting a prioritization and categorization approach to align the planned interventions with the SDGs.

Main SDG is the primary SDG that the specific Action Plan aims to address or contribute towards. The identification of a main SDG indicates that the activities planned under the particular Action Plan are directly aligned with achieving the objectives of this specific SDG. This does not mean that other SDGs are not considered, but rather that the main SDG represents the core focus or the primary impact area of the intervention.

Significant SDGs are additional SDGs that the Action also supports or contributes to, albeit not as directly as the main SDG. The inclusion of up to nine significant SDGs acknowledges the interconnected nature of the SDGs and recognizes that most interventions, while having a primary focus, also have ancillary benefits that support other goals. The mention of "where appropriate, targets" further specifies that not only are the broader goals considered but also specific targets within those goals that the action aims to achieve or contribute towards.

For a minority of documents lacking clear Main and Secondary SDG indications, the approach was as follows: if only one SDG was mentioned, it was deemed the main focus; if multiple SDGs were listed, they were all considered secondary or significant.

Fig. 5 – Frequency Distribution of main SDGs by number of citations and corresponding EC Budget Allocation [Billions € and %] – Scanned Plans sample, 2021-2023



Tab 1. Relationships between primary and secondary SDGs – Scanned Plans sample, 2021-2023

Main SDG	Secondary SDG	Percentage (%)
No Poverty	Gender Equality	15.93
	Zero Hunger	12.64
	Decent Work and Economic Growth	9.89
Zero Hunger	Climate Action	10.53
	Gender Equality	15.79
	No Poverty	9.21
Good Health and Well-being	Gender Equality	19.44
	Reduced Inequality	16.67
	Zero Hunger	13.89
Quality Education	Reduced Inequality	16.45
	Decent Work and Economic Growth	15.13
	Gender Equality	19.74
Gender Equality	Good Health and Well-being	12.9
	Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	19.35
	Reduced Inequality	16.13
Clean Water and Sanitation	Gender Equality	14.29
	Climate Action	11.69
	Good Health and Well-being	9.09
Affordable and Clean Energy	Gender Equality	18.27
	Climate Action	16.35
	Decent Work and Economic Growth	13.46
Decent Work and Economic Growth	Gender Equality	15.0
	Reduced Inequality	11.0
	No Poverty	10.0
Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure	Decent Work and Economic Growth	15.69
	Quality Education	15.69
	Gender Equality	15.69
Reduced Inequality	Gender Equality	20.0
	Quality Education	13.33
	No Poverty	10.0
Sustainable Cities and Communities	Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure	15.0
	Climate Action	15.0
	Clean Water and Sanitation	15.0
Responsible Consumption and Production	Climate Action	14.55
	Gender Equality	14.55
	Decent Work and Economic Growth	10.91

Climate Action	Gender Equality	14.4
	No Poverty	9.6
	Affordable and Clean Energy	8.0
Life Below Water	Gender Equality	11.11
	No Poverty	22.22
	Zero Hunger	11.11
Life on Land	Zero Hunger	11.11
	Climate Action	15.56
	Gender Equality	17.78
Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	Gender Equality	27.55
	Reduced Inequality	15.85
	Decent Work and Economic Growth	7.17
Partnerships for the Goals	Gender Equality	15.05
	Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	12.37
	Decent Work and Economic Growth	9.41

The emphasis on gender mainstreaming, a cross-cutting policy integrated across all development interventions, suggests a strategic alignment between the EC's priorities and progressively oriented SDGs. However, a deeper analysis is required to determine whether the declared contributions to SDGs are accompanied by coherent objectives, outputs, and activities aligned with progressive principles. Thus, while the current analysis remains at a general level, potential critical issues may arise, which will be explored in subsequent stages of analysis. Specifically:

Risk of Tokenism in Partnerships (SDG 17): There's a concern that "Partnerships for the Goals" may be generically applied to any collaboration, rather than concrete actions aimed at impactful change.

Risk of Cross-Cutting Marginalization (SDG 5 and SDG 1): Integrating gender equality and poverty reduction is crucial, yet there's a risk of superficial treatment rather than in-depth engagement.

Measurement and Accountability: The indirect and induced effects on poverty and inequality, potentially through economic growth or strengthening of the private sector, highlight the need for direct targeting of the most vulnerable beneficiaries through robust monitoring and evaluation¹³.

Potential Neglect of Other SDGs: Focusing on a subset of SDGs might overshadow other crucial goals for human development and poverty and inequality reduction, such as "Zero Hunger" (SDG 2) or "Social Protection" (SDG 1.3).

¹³ From this point of view, the importance of researching and promoting new measurement methods is emphasized, as in the case of the new Inequality Marker (I-Marker), which is a monitoring tool for the EC to achieve its overarching objective of "addressing inequalities by building inclusive and sustainable societies". The I-Marker assesses whether, and to what extent, inequality reduction is an objective of development intervention. See: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/2faa22b4-a8fb-11ed-b508-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-280515442>

Box 1. Geographical distribution of SDGs priorities

The analyses provided can be customized at the geographical level, enabling a detailed illustration of the relevance of various SDGs, especially those aligning with progressive priorities, and the interrelationships between SDGs in each geographical region or country.

Below are examples of country-specific commitments to SDGs.

Diversity in Addressing SDGs: Different countries prioritize distinct SDGs, reflecting their unique challenges and priorities. For instance, countries such as Afghanistan, Belize, Bhutan, and Iraq focus primarily on “Eradicating Poverty,” highlighting a fundamental need for poverty alleviation. Conversely, regions like the Americas and Caribbean, and the Middle East, Asia, and Pacific exhibit a wider commitment to goals such as “Climate Action” and “Good Health and Well-being,” showcasing the diverse developmental stages and needs.

Common Themes Across Countries: As highlighted in the previous analysis, which examined the overall number of documents and partner countries, certain SDGs, including “Gender Equality,” “Decent Work and Economic Growth,” and “Partnerships for the Goals,” emerge as common focal points across numerous countries. This indicates a global recognition of the significance of these areas and may foster international cooperation and shared strategies.

Regional Variations: Specific regional commitments, such as a strong focus on “Clean Water and Sanitation” in Mozambique or “Climate Action” in South Sudan, underscore challenges unique to each region. It is crucial to ascertain the extent to which these variations accurately mirror the priorities and needs of the partner countries, as outlined in their national strategies.

The above analyses can be tailored at geographical level. As a result, it is possible to illustrate the relevance of the different SDGs, in particular looking at those that correspond to progressive priorities, and the relations between SDGs in each geographical region or country.

As previously emphasized, deepening the analysis is crucial to determine whether the expected contributions to SDGs are matched by coherent programming.

3.3 Analysis of 'Initiative areas'

Beyond merely analyzing the frequency of prioritized SDGs, extracting key information that accurately describes the actual interventions carried out is crucial for assessing the effective alignment of the EC's actions with progressive priorities.

This information can be found in specific sections of the AAP documents, notably:

- **Summary:** Provides a detailed initial overview of the project.
- **Objectives and Expected Results:** Details the project's short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals, with a particular emphasis on Outputs-short-term results directly linked to the implementation of planned activities.
- **Indicative Activities:** Details the activities planned within the project.

This approach enables the creation of a "fingerprint" of keywords that summarizes each action, in terms of:

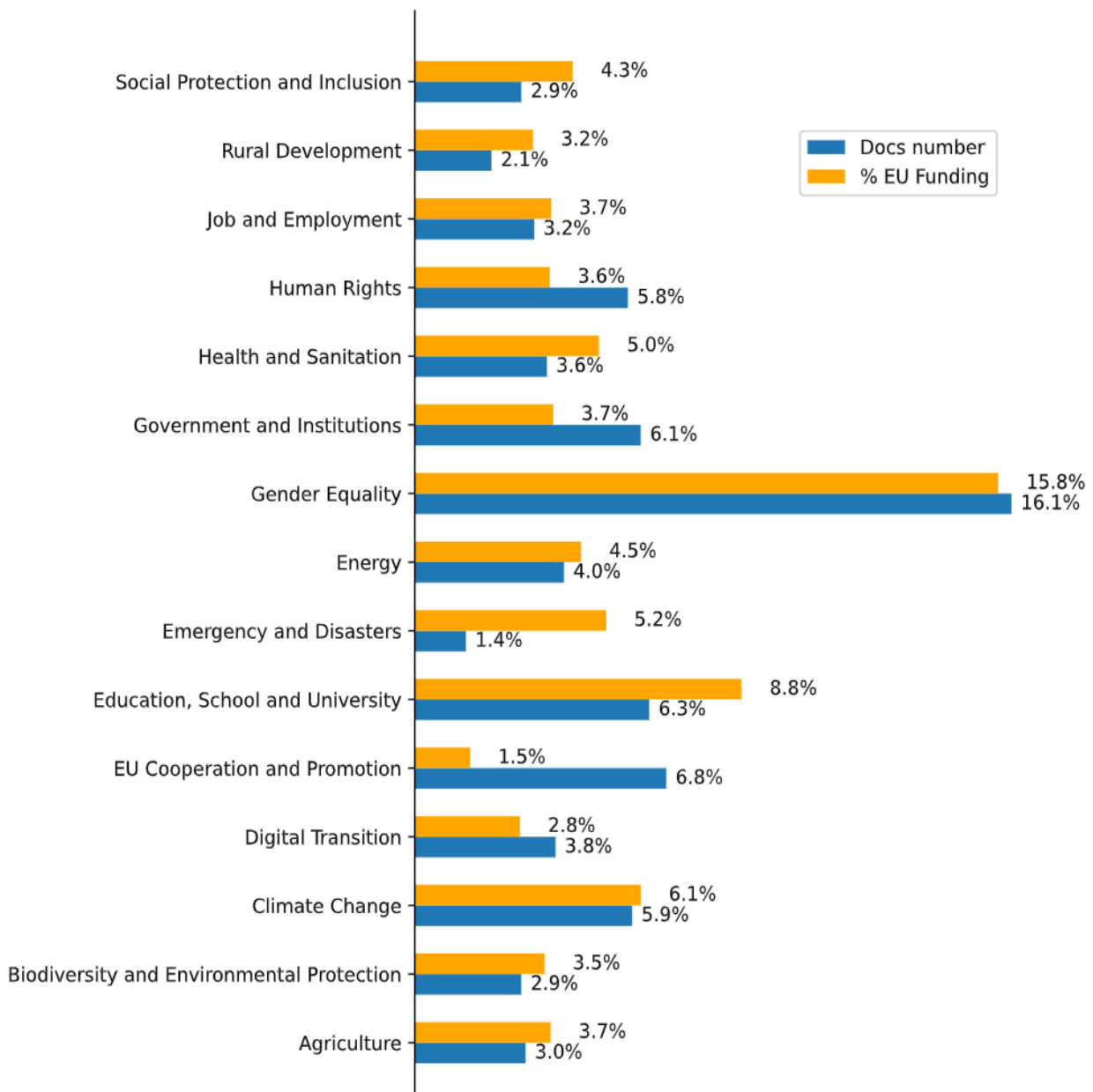
- **Initiative Areas:** The policy scopes or areas targeted by the action.
- **Implementation Modes:** The types of activities envisioned within the action's framework.
- **Target Groups:** The people, institutions, or other entities targeted or involved in the action.

Subsequent figures will present results from the statistical analysis of mapping data about 'initiative areas', based on their percentage representation in documents across 89 countries and the associated EC funding allocation. Only those 15 'initiative areas' that exceed 1.5% in both frequency and funding are included in the report.

Certain initiative areas, notably Gender Equality (accounting for a significant proportion of 16.1% within the documents and 15.8% in terms of funding), emerge as particularly significant. This reflects their global importance and prioritization in funding. However, there is a noted "Risk of cross-cutting marginalization (SDG 5)", indicating potential challenges in comprehensively addressing structural gender inequalities. While EU cooperation and promotion are frequently mentioned as policy objectives, they have received comparatively less financial support.

Other significant initiative areas, such as 'Education, School, and University', and 'Human Rights', are prominently featured. 'Climate Change' is also highlighted (with 5.88% representation in documents and 6.11% in funding), underlining its emerging significance in funding and policy prioritization.

Fig. 6 – Distribution of EC contribution across the 15 most frequent ‘initiative areas’ (above 1.5% of the total) – Scanned Plans sample, 2021-2023



This analysis does not offer a definitive categorization of initiatives but indicates trends suggesting a relative lack of emphasis on certain progressive priorities when transitioning from expected contributions to SDGs to actual interventions. These include areas such as poverty reduction, social protection, and promoting decent work in EU programming.

Box 2. Regional specificities in programmes' policy areas

In the Americas and Caribbean: Gender-related initiatives are prominently highlighted in 16 instances, underscoring the region's focus on achieving gender equality. There is also a considerable emphasis on EU Cooperation and Promotion, reflecting the region's commitment to fostering collaboration towards shared goals. These themes illustrate the region's dedication to addressing gender disparities and enhancing cooperative efforts for mutual benefits.

In Sub-Saharan Africa: Gender-related topics are of paramount importance. Initiatives related to Education, Schools, and Universities are prominently featured, highlighting the crucial role of education in the region's development. Climate Change also emerges as a significant concern, demonstrating the region's awareness of environmental challenges and its pursuit of sustainable solutions.

In the Middle East, Asia, and Pacific: Gender Equality and Climate Change are identified as the predominant themes, signaling a strong focus on promoting equality and tackling environmental issues. The prioritization of these initiatives reflects the region's commitment to social progress and environmental sustainability.

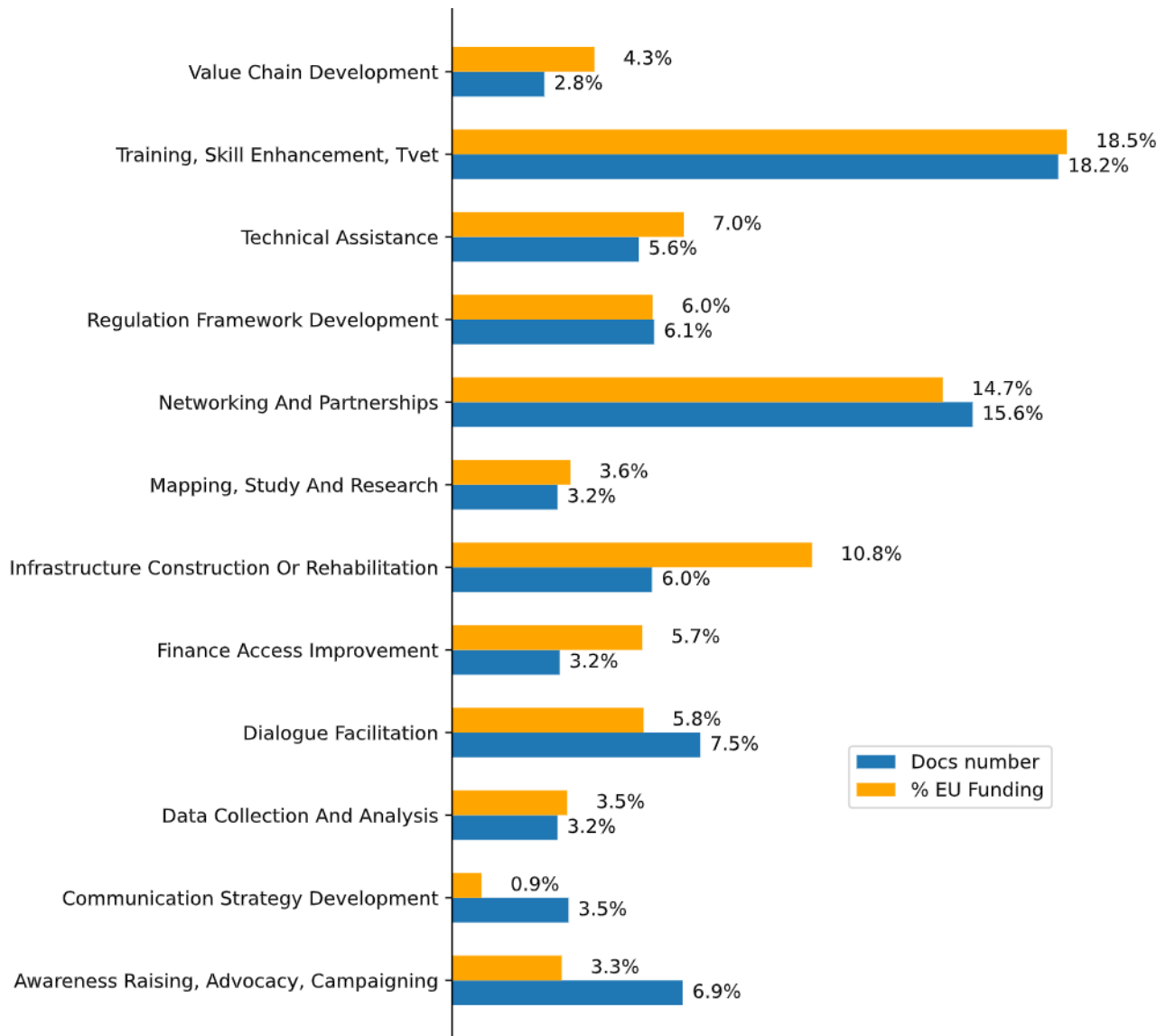
3.4 Analysis of 'Implementation Modes'

The term "Implementation Modes" refers to the types of interventions carried out, such as training, technical assistance, or construction of infrastructure, etc.

The figure below displays the 12 most frequent "implementation modes" (those constituting over 0.9% of the total). The findings reveal that a significant portion of programs (approximately 35%) includes activities related to "Training, Skill Enhancement, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)", and "Networking and Partnership". Additionally, actions pertaining to "Dialogue Facilitation", "Awareness, Advocacy, and Campaigning", and "Regulation Framework Development" are present in one-fifth of the programs. While "Infrastructure Construction or Rehabilitation" appears less frequently in document mentions compared to other categories, it commands a significant portion of funding, accounting for 10.8%. This indicates a substantial financial investment in a smaller number of infrastructure development projects, which, though fewer, are financially significant.

"Technical Assistance" and "Infrastructure Construction or Rehabilitation" stand out as categories receiving a larger share of funding relative to their representation in the documents. This allocation of financial resources suggests a prioritization of these areas, possibly reflecting their perceived importance in the execution of development projects.

Fig. 7 – Distribution of EC contribution across the 12 most frequent ‘implementation modes’ (above 0.9% of the total) ¹⁴ – Scanned Plans sample, 2021-2023

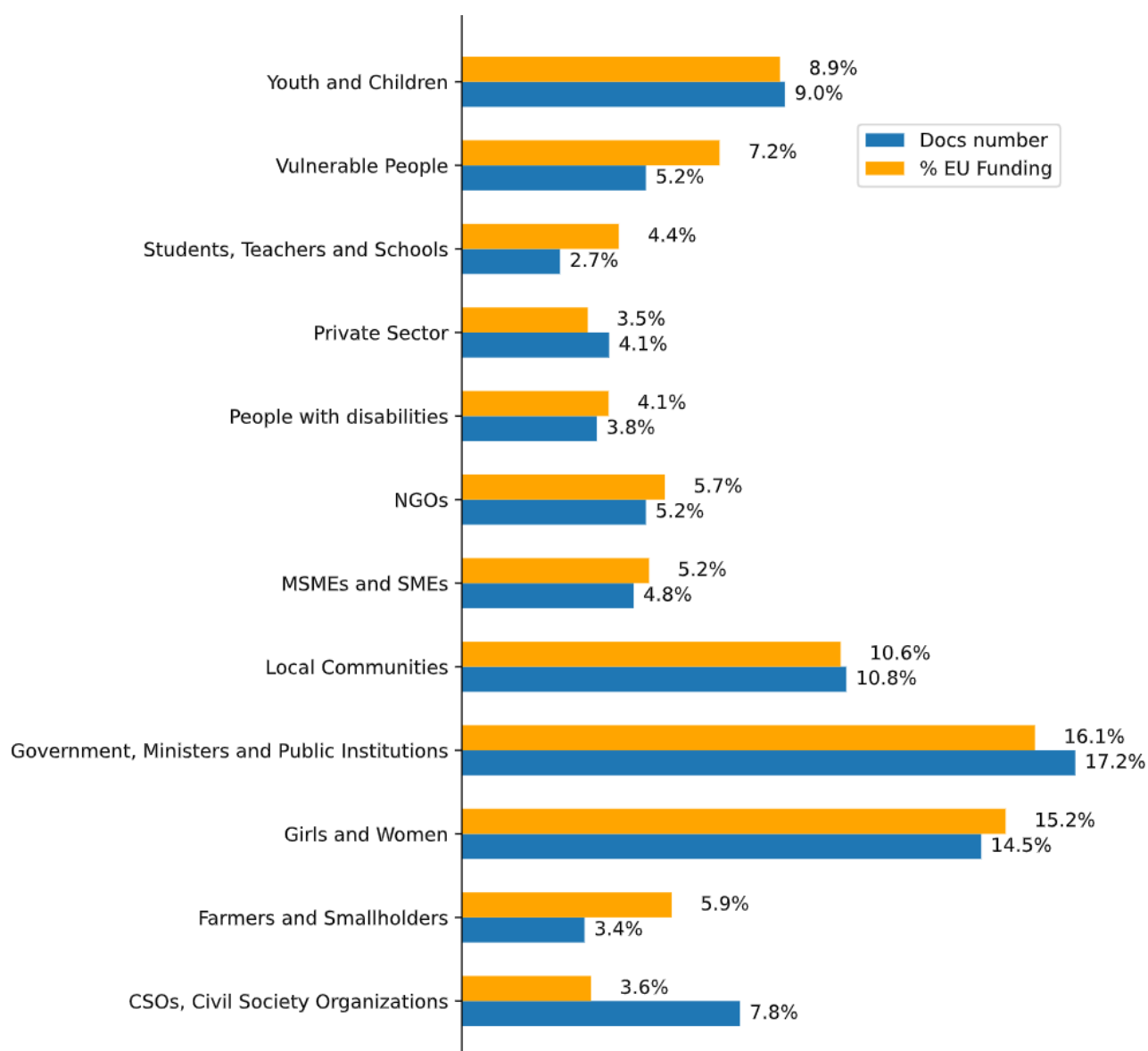


As a result, most programs focus on capacity building through training (which also explains the significant emphasis on education as a policy objective), networking with partners, and to a lesser extent, technical assistance, alongside infrastructure development. These actions are crucial for establishing genuine relationships with partner countries and supporting their capacity to implement sustainable development policies. Adopting such a strategy may be particularly effective when budgetary resources are limited, maximizing the impact of the intervention. However, it is essential to identify the beneficiaries of these interventions and assess the distributional impact of the actions.

¹⁴In many cases, documents annexed to AAPs may have multiple keywords associated with the label 'implementation modes'. In the analysis, the most frequent label was taken, while the budget does not always have a direct association with the label. In addition, it is possible to distinguish the presence and frequency of labels in the different sections of the documents and compare the differences or, as illustrated here, it is possible to combine the data of all the sections of a document and have what in jargon is called a ‘unique fingerprint’ of the ‘implementation modes’

3.5 Analysis of 'target groups'

Fig. 8 – Main 'target groups' of EC interventions in terms of frequency and EC funding (above 3% of the total) – Scanned Plans sample, 2021-2023



The distributional impact of the programs can often be observed through the 'target groups' identified in the AAPs, indicating the primary beneficiaries or stakeholders of the development cooperation initiatives. The analysis of the target groups mentioned in the AAPs offers additional insights into the intended primary beneficiaries of the EC's strategies. Figure 8 displays the top 12 'target groups' (above 3% of the total from the 23 identified in the documents).

The figure reveals that a considerable portion of programs, 17%, target 'Government, ministers, and public institutions'. This finding is consistent with the observation that many interventions broadly

focus on 'education', 'capacity building' and 'training', as well as 'network building with partners', within the wider context of EU cooperation and the strengthening of government institutions.

Furthermore, nearly one-fifth of program documents concentrate on gender equality, aiming primarily to benefit girls and women. This proportion correlates with earlier analyses highlighting the critical role of gender equality as an initiative area. However, despite the NDICI – Global Europe's emphasis on integrating cross-cutting priorities, with at least 85% of actions supposed to have gender equality as a principal or significant objective, the actual share appears limited.

Local communities, though less mentioned in documents compared to government targets, receive considerable attention in terms of both documentation (10.7%) and funding (10.6%). This attention likely reflects a commitment to empowering local communities, enhancing community development, and promoting grassroots-level engagement. Youth and children are also prominently featured, with 9% representation in documents and 8.9% in funding, indicating a focus on meeting the needs and rights of young people and children, possibly through education, healthcare, and social welfare programs aimed at youth and child development.

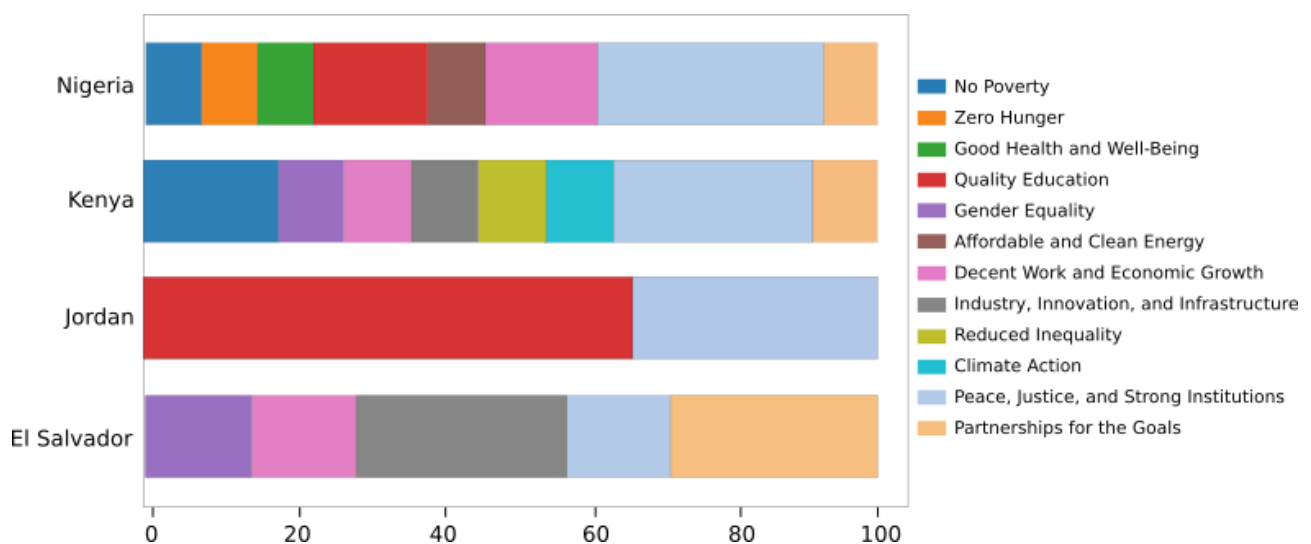
These findings also reveal potential discrepancies between the anticipated contributions to SDGs – where gender equality and the fight against poverty are highlighted – and the actual actions, which target girls and women less clearly and only minimally address the needs of the poorest populations. Additionally, it emphasizes the significance of education activities aimed at capacity building and training, particularly for government officials, local communities, etc. This data may support the hypothesis that the objectives of reducing economic and gender inequalities are mainly pursued through indirect actions, such as capacity building of government entities to implement egalitarian policies. To enhance effectiveness, it would be necessary to either design policies directly tackling inequalities, such as social protection, or to precisely target actions by detailing plans, targets, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, ensuring that the poorest and women significantly benefit, with precise indicators to accurately measure impact and progress.

4. Detailed analysis of development cooperation interventions (2021-23), selected countries

A detailed analysis using the same methodology as the cross-country analysis was conducted for four specific countries: Nigeria, Kenya, Jordan, and El Salvador. These countries, along with Senegal, will undergo complementary qualitative country analysis for a more in-depth examination and validation of the results obtained here, utilizing TM and ML techniques through researchers' document analysis.

The following graph illustrates the distribution of expected contributions to primary SDGs.

Fig. 9 – Distribution of the main SDGs in Nigeria, Kenya, Jordan and El Salvador, 2021-2023 (%)



Nigeria and Kenya exhibit a diverse prioritization of SDGs in their development focus, with a notable emphasis on “Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions” (SDG 16). This priority reflects both countries' strategic efforts to cultivate a stable and just society, which is fundamental for holistic development. The focus on peace and justice is particularly relevant to Nigeria, responding to its internal challenges, including conflict and governance issues, crucial for achieving broader development goals.

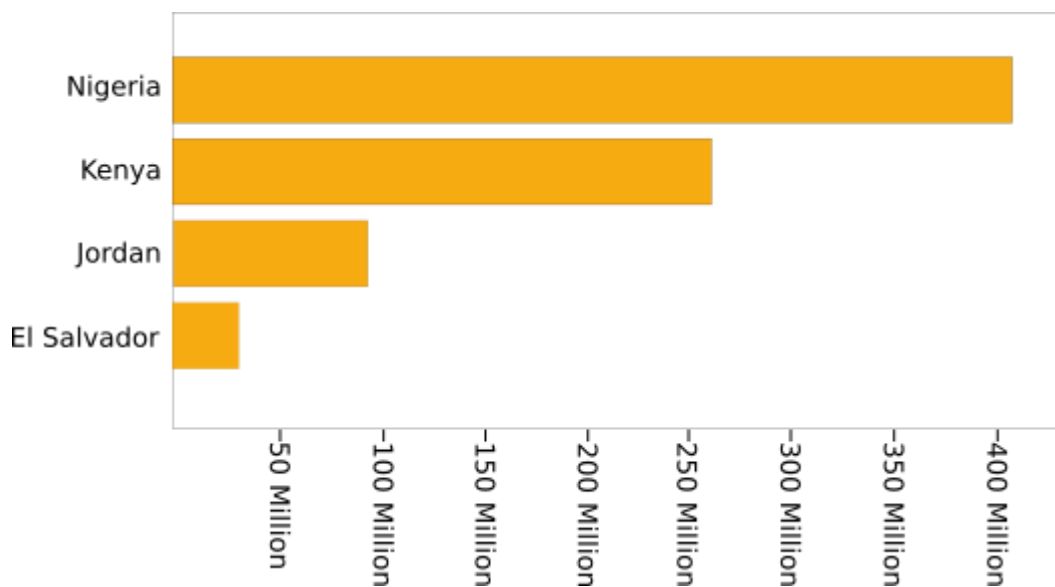
Jordan underscores the importance of “Quality Education” (SDG 4) as its foremost developmental goal. This focus underlines Jordan’s commitment to advancing education as a pillar of sustainable development. By prioritizing quality education, Jordan aims to equip its population with the necessary knowledge and skills for economic growth, social equity, and environmental stewardship, recognizing education as a key driver of progress across various SDGs.

El Salvador sets itself apart by prioritizing “Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure” (SDG 9) alongside “Partnerships for the Goals” (SDG 17). This dual emphasis suggests a concerted push toward economic growth through industrial and infrastructural advancement and innovation. Furthermore, the focus on partnerships accentuates El Salvador’s understanding of the significance of collaborative efforts – both locally and internationally – in realizing its developmental objectives, indicating a strategic approach to leveraging collective action for sustainable advancement.

The secondary level of this analysis delves into the initiatives and strategies utilized by each country to advance their prioritized SDGs. This qualitative exploration offers insights into the specific actions undertaken, the challenges faced, and the progress toward achieving sustainable development objectives. The analysis reveals the diversity of approaches and the complexity of implementing SDG-aligned initiatives, reflecting the unique socio-economic and political contexts of each country.

The subsequent figure examines the budget allocated to each country (in Euros) for the 2021-2023 period.

Fig. 10 – Budget allocation to El Salvador, Jordan, Kenya, and Nigeria (Euro), 2021-2023



5. Qualitative country analysis of 5 countries

5.1 Methodology and results of internal-external coherence

This section conducts an in-depth review of five selected countries: El Salvador, Jordan, Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal¹⁵. It assesses the internal and external coherence of the AAPs within each country's context. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data and feedback from local stakeholders, this qualitative examination seeks to identify the challenges and opportunities related to planned AAP implementation, laying the groundwork for informed recommendations to improve information access and transparency.

To achieve this, the analysis incorporates AAPs for each country for 2021, 2022, and 2023, the most recent National Development Plans, the Sustainable Development Report, UNDP's Integrated SDG Insights, and documents associated with the Global Gateways (GG) initiative¹⁶. Additional reports on each country's national development strategy were also reviewed to evaluate the AAPs' external coherence concerning the progressive priorities championed by the S&D group.

For AAPs, the ML analysis is complemented by a thorough review of the AAP documents, particularly the Annexes detailing each action, and the Logical Framework Matrix. The latter is crucial for assessing the logical coherence and expected impact of each project. Budgetary data for each objective were also utilized to estimate the likelihood of successful implementation.

A table with 10 columns was created to allow an easy overview and comparison of the documents. This structured method facilitates a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the coherence and alignment of the AAPs with national development priorities and progressive objectives.

The table provides a summarized analysis of various documents related to a country's development priorities, assessing their alignment with S&D priorities and SDGs. Here's a simplified explanation of each column:

The table provides a summary analysis of various documents related to the country's development priorities. It includes an assessment of how each document aligns with S&D priorities and SDGs. Here's a simplified breakdown of what each column represents:

¹⁵ It is worth mentioning that the case of Senegal presents a unique challenge compared to the other four countries under analysis. Primarily, the majority of documents, including the AAPs, were only available in French. Moreover, many of these documents did not adhere to a consistent structure, with crucial sections like subchapter "4.5 Indicative Budget" often not including the budget allocation to specific objectives. Consequently, the analysis for Senegal required a slightly different approach while maintaining the same analytical framework. Adjustments were made to both the table and the analysis to accommodate the available data.

¹⁶ The analysis considered documents available up to the end of August 2023, including Annual Action Plans (AAPs) for the years 2021, 2022, and 2023, the latest National Development Plans, Sustainable Development Report, UNDP's Integrated SDG Insights, and project documents associated with the Global Gateways initiative. Documents uploaded after this date were not included in the analysis.

The analysis of the role played by the Global Getaway initiative in the framework of European cooperation suffers from the lack of a single reference that systematizes the official information on the projects financed by the Global Getaway and provides details on the amounts allocated.

- Action Plan Columns: These analyze the AAPs from 2021 to 2023, showing each AAP's alignment with S&D priorities and estimating the likelihood of implementing actions to enhance those priorities.
- Prospective Implementation Columns: These columns preliminarily assess the potential for effective implementation and the achievement of expected results.
- MIP, National Development Plan, GG Columns: These assess the MIP 2021-2027, the GG Initiative (if applicable), and the National Development Plan (if available), demonstrating how these documents or initiatives align with S&D priorities.
- SDGs Columns: These establish the connection between S&D priorities and SDGs, illustrating the importance of SDGs in addressing S&D priorities and tracking progress in each priority area based on SDG indicators.

The alignment columns use a 0 to 5 scale, with higher values indicating stronger alignment with S&D priorities. In the Prospective Implementation columns, values are depicted by up to four bars, with each bar representing a 25% probability of implementation. This probability combines two components: two-thirds (2/3) of the budget allocated to the specific project and the alignment rating from the quantitative and qualitative AAP analysis conducted by experts. The SDG/Progress column uses arrows to indicate progress.

These tables act as crucial visual aids, clarifying the complex aspects of external and internal coherence and alignment between the AAPs and S&D group's progressive priorities. Additionally, key questions from interviews with local stakeholders are included, enhancing our understanding of the findings and identifying areas for further investigation and improvement within EU development aid's strategic alignment with S&D priorities.

5.2 El Salvador

The analysis of El Salvador's development landscape reveals a multi-faceted approach to tackling socio-economic challenges, with notable emphasis on poverty reduction, education, and governance. The alignment with S&D priorities in the country's Action Plans is apparent, though some sectors show potential for enhancement.

Unlike conventional AAPs that focus mainly on individual projects for funding, the 2022 AAP prioritizes strategic planning, engagement, communication actions, and technical support aligned with the MIP. This strategic focus highlights a commitment to coherent development planning and alignment with broader EU development objectives but also raises concerns about the capacity of planned actions to effectively address El Salvador's specific S&D priorities. Moving away from project-specific funding may inadvertently reduce the AAP's impact on critical development areas, possibly impeding progress in addressing key socio-economic challenges.

Governance and water and sanitation emerge as the least addressed priorities across all EU aid channels, a concerning observation given the vital importance of governance and access to clean

water for achieving broader S&D objectives. The scant attention to these areas underscores the need for increased focus and investment in sectors critical to sustainable development and poverty reduction.

Conversely, technology and employment receive significant focus within the aid framework, especially through a major connectivity project under the GG initiative, acknowledging their importance in addressing socio-economic challenges and promoting inclusive growth. Allocating resources and support towards these priorities demonstrates an effort to boost El Salvador's technological capacity, foster innovation, and create decent, productive employment opportunities. However, variances in alignment across different priorities reveal the complexities of development planning and execution, highlighting the need for enhanced coherence and coordination among various development strategies and initiatives.

While the 2021 AAP shows strong alignment with poverty reduction, the prospective implementation score points to challenges in effective realization, indicating a strategic focus on poverty-related issues within the AAP but potential obstacles in translating these intentions into tangible outcomes. Furthermore, alignment discrepancies between the MIP and National Development Plan highlight the necessity for better coordination and harmonization of development priorities at national and regional levels.

Lastly, the absence of a comprehensive national strategic plan since 2019 raises questions about the country's long-term development vision and its effectiveness in addressing development priorities. Understanding the reasons behind this absence is crucial for identifying gaps and opportunities to strengthen development planning and execution processes, possibly necessitating a thorough review of existing policies, strategies, and institutional frameworks to ensure coherence and alignment with broader national and international development agendas.

In conclusion, El Salvador partially aligns its development agenda with S&D priorities, notably through targeted interventions in poverty reduction and infrastructure development. However, challenges remain in fully integrating gender equality and environmental sustainability into national strategies, indicating areas for further improvement. Enhancing coordination between government initiatives and international aid programs is essential to address these gaps comprehensively and achieve sustainable progress towards the SDGs.

Global Gateway – El Salvador

The analysis of the role played by the Global Gateway initiative in the framework of European cooperation in El Salvador reveals a multifaceted engagement aimed at enhancing infrastructure and fostering holistic development. The outputs presented here represent concrete infrastructure investments under the Global Gateway initiative, accompanied by comprehensive soft measures within a 360° approach. These measures aim to enhance the policy, regulatory, and business environment, develop skills, foster innovation, and transfer technology.

- National Projects:

Transport:

- Pacific Train: Corridor One linking the port of Acajutla with San Salvador, featuring a 108 km train network.
- Surface Metro Line One: Implementation of an electric passenger transportation system.
- Aerocable Lines: Integrated within the mass transportation system in the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador, facilitating access to densely populated areas.

Digital Connectivity:

- Last km Connectivity: Provision of broadband connectivity to public schools and health centers in underserved areas.
- Pacific Optical Fiber Submarine Cable: Infrastructure deployment to bolster regional digital connectivity.
- Deployment of 5G technology to enhance communication networks.

- Regional Projects (Central America - Climate & Energy):

Reinforcement of the regional electricity market and its dedicated transmission line, alongside critical national transmission infrastructure upgrades.

- Corredor Seco Initiative: Implementation of ecosystem-based adaptation strategies and innovative financial mechanisms to bolster resilience to extreme climate events.
- Five Great Forests of Mesoamerica Initiative: Collaboration to protect 10 million hectares of forests, restore 500,000 hectares of forest land, prevent species extinction, and eradicate illegal cattle farming by 2030, ensuring sustainable forest management.

All projects are financed through a collaborative effort involving multiple sources, including the European Union, EU member countries (such as Spain, France, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, and The Netherlands), European Investment Bank (EIB), Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF), and Central American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE).

At a glance

- **Discrepancies in Alignment and Prioritization:** The disparities in alignment among various S&D priorities highlight the complexities of development planning and execution, emphasizing the need for improved coherence and coordination. Specifically, the analysis of El Salvador reveals that while certain S&D priorities are addressed through the AAP, others are tackled through GG initiatives.
- **Shift Toward Strategic Planning and Technical Support:** The 2022 AAP for El Salvador places an emphasis on strategic planning and technical support, in line with the MIP, marking a departure from traditional project-specific funding models. However, this shift may also suggest challenges, such as a lack of preparedness and administrative resources.
- **Deviation from the MIP:** A noticeable discrepancy exists between the AAPs and the MIP. For example, while education is highlighted as a significant priority in the MIP, the AAPs exhibit minimal initiatives related to education.
- **Challenges in Water and Sanitation:** Water and sanitation are identified as the least addressed priorities across all EU aid channels in El Salvador, pointing to difficulties in effectively addressing these critical issues.
- **Emphasis on Technology, Employment, and Poverty through GG:** The aid framework notably focuses on technology, employment, and poverty, demonstrating a concerted effort to address the pressing socio-economic challenges facing the country.
- **Absence of a Comprehensive National Strategic Plan:** The lack of a comprehensive national strategic plan since 2019 raises concerns regarding El Salvador's long-term development vision and underscores the challenges in effectively addressing development priorities.

Insights – El Salvador¹⁷

The lack of a comprehensive national development strategy in El Salvador since 2019 has raised concerns about its potential long-term effects, particularly in hampering sustainable economic growth, social stability, and the country's ability to tackle structural challenges such as poverty and inequality. This absence of strategic guidance could result in difficulties across vital sectors like education, health, infrastructure, and security, adversely affecting investor confidence and international cooperation. Nevertheless, on December 15, 2023, the National Council for Sustainable Development (CNDC), with backing from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in El Salvador, launched the National Integral Development Strategy (ENDI) aimed at mitigating these issues.

Regarding the AAP in El Salvador, there is a noticeable inclination to prioritize small-scale environmental projects over addressing broader socio-economic challenges. Additionally, gender issues are addressed only superficially, which could lead to conflicts and criticisms, particularly in light of recent government decisions to exclude gender-related ideologies from public education.

Projects under the GG initiative present an opportunity to bolster national development efforts by facilitating access to global resources and expertise, potentially enhancing local capabilities and meeting development needs. However, the effectiveness of these projects largely depends on successful collaboration with local entities.

Barriers to progress in areas such as governance, water, and sanitation stem from institutional and technical capacity deficits, insufficient funding, and a lack of stakeholder coordination. Overcoming these obstacles necessitates strategies focused on institutional strengthening, international cooperation, establishing efficient coordination mechanisms, and engaging communities. Such approaches are crucial for fostering inclusive and sustainable development in El Salvador.

¹⁷ In particular, we thank Wilian Osvaldo Flores Monzon, project director of *Árboles y Agua para el Pueblo* (AAP) NGO, El Salvador.

Tab. 2 - External and Internal Coherence Analysis for El Salvador's AAPs by S&D Group's Progressive Priority

	Action Plan				MIP	National Development Plan	Global Getaways	SDGs	
	2021		2022*					Importance	Progress
	Alignment	Perspective Implementation	Alignment	Perspective Implementation					
(i) Poverty: economic poverty, social protection, access to social services, tenure rights.	4 ¹		1		3	El Salvador has not published a comprehensive national strategic plan since the year 2019.	1	3	↑
(ii) Health: nutrition, diseases, mortality, reproduction, access to health services, environment.	2 ²		1		3		1	3	↔
(iii) Gender equality: non-discrimination, gender violence, child marriage, genital mutilation, unpaid domestic work, women empowerment, reproduction, tenure rights.	4 ³		1		3		0	3	→
(iv) Education: primary education, other levels of education, education participation, education effectiveness.	1 ⁴		2		4		1	2	→
(v) Water & sanitation: drinking water, sanitation.	2 ⁵		0		1		0	1	→
(vi) Energy: access to energy services.	0		0		1		5	3	↔
(vii) Employment: informal employment, earnings, unemployment, child labour.	3 ⁶		2		4		5	4	→
(viii) Infrastructure: roads, connectivity.	0		0		1		5	4	→
(ix) Housing and cities: housing, public transport, safety.	0		0		2		4	4	→
(x) Technology: connectivity.	5 ⁷		2		5		5	4	→
(xi) Governance: inclusive decision-making	0		2		5		2	5	→

5.3 Jordan

Jordan's development landscape showcases a complex interplay between national priorities and EU interventions, with a focus on poverty alleviation, health, and education. Although there's alignment with S&D priorities in specific sectors, gaps needing attention are identified to ensure comprehensive development.

Regarding poverty alleviation, Jordan's National Development Plan emphasizes it significantly. However, the EU's interventions show only moderate alignment with poverty-related S&D priorities, lacking depth for effective perspective implementation due to the absence of direct poverty alleviation interventions, only anticipating indirect impacts. This indicates a potential mismatch between the breadth of Jordan's goals and the specificity of EU aid initiatives.

In Jordan's context, health and education are high priorities, as indicated by both the MIP and the National Development Plan. Despite their recognition as key areas, AAPs foresee only actions with moderate impacts on S&D health and education priorities, suggesting gaps in comprehensively addressing these critical needs.

Infrastructure and water & sanitation sectors align well with Jordan's aspirations and EU aid efforts, particularly benefitting from GG initiatives. The focus on infrastructure projects may reflect a demand for tangible results but should be balanced with long-term sustainability considerations.

Energy, prioritized in Jordan's National Development Plan, receives little support, indicating a potential oversight crucial for sustainable development and economic growth. Incorporating energy initiatives into future plans could enhance Jordan's resilience and sustainability.

Gender equality, despite significant disparities indicated by the "Global Gender Gap Report 2021"¹⁸, is not prioritized explicitly in Jordan's strategy or in EU aid projects, underlining the need for targeted interventions to address these challenges.

Employment and governance align well between Jordan's priorities and EU interventions, promising for socio-economic development. Yet, ensuring these efforts yield tangible societal benefits remains crucial.

Technology, with potential to drive innovation and contribute to SDGs, lacks explicit prioritization. Integrating technology initiatives could unlock development opportunities for Jordan.

The EU's support in response to the refugee crisis through special measures for Jordan in 2021 and 2022 highlights the interconnectedness of regional crises and national development, primarily targeting refugee populations but also indirectly influencing Jordan's broader development landscape.

Overall, while there's partial alignment with S&D priorities across sectors, improvement is needed in depth, sustainability, and inclusivity of EU aid interventions. Strengthening partnerships, enhancing coordination, and prioritizing long-term investments are essential for Jordan to address

¹⁸ The World Economic Forum, 2021. *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*. <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2021/>

its development challenges effectively and progress sustainably towards the SDGs, especially in employment, governance, gender equality, and energy sectors.

Global Gateway – Jordan

The analysis of the role played by the Global Gateway initiative in the context of European cooperation in Jordan underscores a strategic investment approach aimed at addressing key developmental challenges and fostering resilience across various sectors. The Economic and Investment Plan for the Southern Neighbourhood serves as a comprehensive framework guiding investments in human development, good governance, resilience, prosperity, digital transition, migration and mobility, as well as green transition focusing on climate resilience, energy, and environment.

Key Projects Include:

- Aqaba Amman Water Desalination and Conveyance Project: This initiative aims to alleviate Jordan’s chronic water shortages by annually providing 300 million cubic meters of desalinated water throughout the country. The desalination plant will be constructed in the Gulf of Aqaba in the Red Sea.
- Rehabilitation and Upgrading of As Salt Sewage Treatment Plant and Construction of Biogas Plant: Details of this project are currently not provided; however, it is focused on enhancing wastewater treatment capabilities and promoting sustainable energy through biogas production.
- Aqaba Solid Waste Project: This project aims to address solid waste management challenges in the Aqaba region through infrastructure development and sustainable waste management practices.
- West Irbid Wastewater Treatment Plant: Specific details regarding this project are currently unavailable; however, it is geared towards enhancing wastewater treatment capacities in the West Irbid region.
- Aqaba Electric Bus Project: This initiative aims to decarbonize transport in the Aqaba region by introducing electric buses, contributing to efforts aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting sustainable urban mobility.

These projects collectively contribute to Jordan’s socio-economic development, environmental sustainability, and resilience-building efforts. Financing for these initiatives is sourced from various partners, including the European Union, international financial institutions, and other stakeholders committed to advancing Jordan’s development agenda.

At a glance

- **Alignment with Development Priorities:** Notable alignment exists between Jordan's development priorities and sectors targeted by EU aid, yet gaps in intervention depth and specificity suggest areas for enhancement.
- **Moderate Emphasis on Poverty, Health, and Education:** Despite being high priorities, poverty, health, and education receive moderate emphasis in EU aid actions, indicating a need for more targeted interventions.
- **Support for Infrastructure, Water, and Sanitation:** Through Global Gateways projects, EU initiatives adequately address infrastructure, water, and sanitation sectors, reflecting a demand for tangible development results.
- **Lack of Support for the Energy Sector:** The energy sector, a priority in Jordan's National Development Plan, lacks sufficient support, pointing to a need for addressing this crucial area.
- **Concerns Regarding Gender Equality:** The need for specific interventions to address gender disparities is highlighted, despite gender equality not being explicitly prioritized but recognized as a concern based on external assessments.

Insights – Jordan¹⁹

The alignment between Jordan’s development priorities and EU interventions seems well-coordinated, with EU programs tailored to the government’s focus areas. The partnership currently emphasizes economic recovery post-COVID-19, green growth, employability, and improved access to education.

Challenges in aligning Jordan’s National Development Plan with EU aid initiatives include a significant demand for infrastructure and energy development that is not entirely met by the current level of support. Engaging the international community, fostering partnerships with the private sector and civil societies, and overcoming technical capacity and regulatory framework challenges are critical. Embracing development effectiveness principles such as local ownership is vital for the success of these projects.

EU interventions in response to the refugee crisis in Jordan have shown effectiveness, encompassing various sectors and bolstering the government’s efforts. For enhanced impact, improved coordination with the international community and partnership with community-based organizations for joint advocacy are recommended.

Incorporating priority strategies for gender equality into Jordan’s development agenda and EU aid projects should involve enforcing laws, enhancing governance, and ensuring women’s meaningful participation in decision-making processes to address disparities effectively.

¹⁹ In particular, we thank Deema Abu Thiab, National Programme Coordinator, UN-Habitat, Jordan, who facilitated consultation with some Jordanian scholars and practitioners on site.

Tab. 3 - External and Internal Coherence Analysis for Jordan's AAPs by S&D Group's Progressive Priority

	Action Plan				MIP	National Development Plan	Global Getaways	SDGs	
	2021		2022					Importance	Progress
	Alignment	Perspective Implementation	Alignment	Perspective Implementation					
(i) Poverty: economic poverty, social protection, access to social services, tenure rights.	3		1		3	3	3	3	
(ii) Health: nutrition, diseases, mortality, reproduction, access to health services, environment.	3		3		4	4	3	2	
(iii) Gender equality: non-discrimination, gender violence, child marriage, genital mutilation, unpaid domestic work, women empowerment, reproduction, tenure rights.	2		3		1	3	0	1	
(iv) Education: primary education, other levels of education, education participation, education effectiveness.	1		3		5	5	2	3	
(v) Water & sanitation: drinking water, sanitation.	3		0		4	5	5	3	
(vi) Energy: access to energy services.	3		0		2	5	3	3	
(vii) Employment: informal employment, earnings, unemployment, child labour.	3		4		4	5	2	5	
(viii) Infrastructure: roads, connectivity.	4		0		1	4	4	5	
(ix) Housing and cities: housing, public transport, safety.	4		0		1	4	2	4	
(x) Technology: connectivity.	2		2		2	2	2	5	
(xi) Governance: inclusive decision-making	2		4		5	5	0	3	

5.4 Kenya

Kenya's development strategy emphasizes poverty reduction, gender equality, health, and education, with considerable support for employment, infrastructure, and housing sectors within its aid framework. Although alignment with S&D priorities is noticeable, challenges in effective implementation and coherence between national strategies require attention.

The AAPs for 2021 and 2022 outline Kenya's development path toward poverty reduction, gender equality, health, and education, showcasing alignment with S&D priorities. However, caution is advised due to perspective implementation scores indicating potential challenges in achieving strategic goals, with resource limitations and governance obstacles presenting significant barriers to realizing aspirations.

Global initiatives, notably the GG projects, stand out as key supporters of Kenya's sustainable development efforts, aligning with S&D priorities. These initiatives enhance Kenya's development capacity, complementing national efforts and contributing to the achievement of international goals.

Within Kenya's aid framework, employment, infrastructure, and housing are prioritized, recognizing their essential roles in socio-economic progress. However, water and sanitation sectors face neglect, with low alignment and implementation scores highlighting deficiencies in public health and sustainable development efforts. Addressing these issues is crucial for ensuring all Kenyans have access to clean water and sanitation.

Governance and technology play significant roles in Kenya's development, with governance facing challenges in execution despite moderate attention. Technology, on the other hand, receives high alignment and implementation scores, reflecting efforts to improve technological infrastructure and connectivity. Education, as a fundamental pillar of development, is crucial yet shows variability in progress toward related SDGs, indicating the need for focused interventions and investment. Gender equality, unfortunately, receives the least support among S&D priorities, emphasizing the need for increased efforts to overcome gender disparities.

The 2022 AAP marks a hopeful improvement in alignment with S&D priorities compared to its predecessor. Nonetheless, inconsistencies with the National Development Plan underscore the necessity for enhanced coherence across national strategies.

In summary, while Kenya demonstrates alignment with S&D priorities, especially in areas like poverty reduction and infrastructure development, challenges remain, particularly in water & sanitation and governance. Addressing these challenges with targeted actions and better coherence between national and EU strategies is vital for Kenya's sustainable development.

Global Gateway – Kenya

The analysis of the role played by the Global Gateway initiative in Kenya underlines a strategic approach towards human-centered digitalization and infrastructural development aimed at enhancing connectivity, trade facilitation, and renewable energy generation. The Human-Centered Digitalisation Initiative focuses on constructing optic fiber infrastructure and last-mile connections to underserved areas, prioritizing school connectivity and digital servicing. Additionally, it aims to extend broadband access through the development of mobile access networks in rural areas.

Key Projects Include:

- Human-Centred Digitalisation Initiative: This initiative aims to construct optic fiber infrastructure and extend last-mile connections to underserved areas, with a focus on enhancing school connectivity and digital servicing. It also includes the development of mobile access networks in rural areas to extend broadband access.
- Northern Strategic Transport Corridor: Projects along the Northern Corridor aim to improve regional connectivity and trade, linking Kenya with neighboring Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. As the busiest trade and transport corridor in East Africa, these projects facilitate transport and trade, fostering economic growth and regional integration.
- Olkaria I & IV Upgrading Project: The modernization of the Olkaria geothermal power plant aims to increase renewable electricity generation capacity and ensure its availability, contributing to Kenya's efforts to enhance energy security and transition towards renewable energy sources.
- Transfer of Innovative Polish Biogas Technology to the Agricultural Sector in Kenya: This initiative involves the transfer of innovative Polish biogas technology to Kenya's agricultural sector. The electricity generated from biogas plants will stabilize electric grid supplies, benefiting local residents and promoting sustainable energy practices.
- Zambia – Tanzania – Kenya (ZTK) Interconnector: The construction of a 594 km double circuit 400 kV line from Panslo to the Zambia Tanzania Border aims to enhance regional integration and foster economic development through electricity trade. This interconnector project enhances security and reliability of electricity supply, contributing to regional economic growth.

These projects are integral to Kenya's socio-economic development agenda, fostering digital inclusion, enhancing energy security, promoting sustainable agriculture, and facilitating regional integration. Financing for these initiatives is sourced from various partners, including the European Union, international financial institutions, and other stakeholders committed to advancing Kenya's development objectives.

At a glance

- **Emphasis on Key Development Priorities:** The AAPs for 2021 and 2022 underscore
- **Emphasis on Key Development Priorities:** AAPs for 2021 and 2022 highlight Kenya's focus on poverty reduction, gender equality, health, and education. Nevertheless, challenges in effective implementation due to resource constraints and governance hurdles are evident, as indicated by the alignment and perspective implementation scores.
- **Improved Alignment with S&D Priorities:** The 2022 AAP shows better alignment with S&D priorities than its predecessor. However, there remains inconsistency with the National Development Plan, signaling the need for more cohesive national strategies, as the data analysis suggests.
- **Role of GG Initiatives:** GG initiatives play a supportive role in Kenya, advancing progress towards S&D priorities and enhancing the impact of AAPs and local efforts, as reflected by the alignment and implementation scores.
- **Attention to Priority Areas:** Employment, infrastructure, and housing are notably emphasized and supported within Kenya's aid framework, aligning with the country's development goals.
- **Challenges in Water and Sanitation:** Persistent issues in water and sanitation impact public health and sustainable development in Kenya. The urgency of these challenges is underscored by low alignment and implementation scores, highlighting the need for concerted efforts.
- **Mixed Outcomes in Governance and Technology:** Governance receives moderate attention, while technology stands out, indicative of efforts to enhance technological infrastructure, as shown in the data analysis.
- **Education as a Priority:** Education is a focal point in Kenya's development, stressing the need for specialized interventions and more investment in education infrastructure and quality education delivery. The importance of education is particularly noted in its alignment with S&D priorities.
- **Gender Equality Challenges:** Gender equality, while a priority, receives comparatively less support, underscoring the necessity for intensified efforts towards inclusive and sustainable development. This is supported by data, indicating a need for focused initiatives in this area.

Insights – Kenya²⁰

The main obstacles to progress in water and sanitation stem from a lack of political will and societal attitudes, with leaders often favoring more visible projects over crucial infrastructure. This impedes resource allocation and community engagement, further complicated by gender disparities as women bear the brunt of water collection, yet their concerns are frequently marginalized.

Despite its prioritization, gender equality receives relatively low support due to male-dominated policy-making spaces, cultural norms, and insufficient education. Addressing this involves raising awareness, collecting gender-specific data, advocating through civil society, enforcing existing laws like the two-thirds gender rule, and implementing civic education to promote gender equality.

Progress towards aligning with S&D priorities is attributed to decreased political interference, facilitating a more technocratic approach. Initiatives showing progress likely encountered fewer political hurdles and received recognition from political leaders. Minimizing political interference and focusing on evidence-based policy are essential for enhancing alignment and coherence in Kenya's development strategies.

The education sector grapples with declining public education quality, corruption, and the spread of fake diplomas, undermining confidence in public schools and pushing families towards expensive private options. To advance quality education for all, restoring faith in public schools, enhancing oversight of private institutions, and promoting education as a public good among political leaders and the community are critical steps.

²⁰ In particular, we thank Arthur Muliro, Deputy Managing Director at the International Secretariat of the Society for International Development.

Tab. 4 – External and Internal Coherence Analysis for Kenya’s AAPs by S&D Group’s Progressive Priority

	Action Plan				MIP	National Development Plan*	Global Getaways**	SDGs	
	2021		2022					Importance	Progress
	Alignment	Perspective Implementation	Alignment	Perspective Implementation					
(i) Poverty: economic poverty, social protection, access to social services, tenure rights.	5 ¹		4 ¹⁰		3	2	2	4	➔
(ii) Health: nutrition, diseases, mortality, reproduction, access to health services, environment.	3 ²		3 ¹¹		2	3	4	5	➔
(iii) Gender equality: non-discrimination, gender violence, child marriage, genital mutilation, unpaid domestic work, women empowerment, reproduction, tenure rights.	3 ³		2 ¹²		4	3	0	3	↻
(iv) Education: primary education, other levels of education, education participation, education effectiveness.	0		3 ¹³		4	4	0	5	↻
(v) Water & sanitation: drinking water, sanitation.	0		4 ¹⁴		1	3	0	4	➔
(vi) Energy: access to energy services.	2 ⁴		3 ¹⁵		5	5	4	3	↻
(vii) Employment: informal employment, earnings, unemployment, child labour.	4 ⁵		3 ¹⁶		3	4	2	3	➔
(viii) Infrastructure: roads, connectivity.	4 ⁶		4 ¹⁷		1	5	5	3	↻
(ix) Housing and cities: housing, public transport, safety.	1 ⁷		5 ¹⁸		5	5	3	4	↓
(x) Technology: connectivity.	2 ⁸		5 ¹⁹		1	5	5	3	↻
(xi) Governance: inclusive decision-making	3 ⁹		3 ²⁰		5	5	2	2	➔

5.5 Nigeria

Nigeria's development landscape is marked by diverse objectives and challenges, with certain sectors such as poverty reduction and education aligning well with S&D priorities. However, there are noticeable gaps in comprehensively addressing health, water & sanitation, and gender equality.

The AAPs for 2021 and 2022 show varied degrees of alignment with S&D priorities across different sectors. The scores for poverty-related initiatives indicate some effort toward addressing economic poverty, social protection, and access to services, yet there is a need for enhanced implementation to turn strategic goals into concrete results.

Despite energy and health being prioritized in the MIP, their omission from the AAPs raises concerns about the coherence between Nigeria's national priorities and EU development assistance strategies.

An in-depth review of AAP projects reveals their specific and targeted nature in addressing socio-economic issues. However, some projects may not align directly with S&D priorities, potentially diminishing their impact. Concerns also exist about the sufficiency of financial resources allocated to these projects, especially those aimed at tackling major challenges like governance and education.

The emphasis on poverty reduction and infrastructure development in both the SDGs relevance data and the National Development Plan highlights their essential role in Nigeria's socio-economic progress. Nonetheless, there's a discrepancy with EU aid focusing significantly on education, employment, and governance, rather than on areas deemed crucial by Nigeria.

In Nigeria's AAPs, governance, education, and employment are prioritized, showcasing the country's commitment to human capital development and economic empowerment. Conversely, GG initiatives focus on health, education, and energy, presenting a varied approach to socio-economic challenges.

Analysis of the GG initiatives indicates inconsistency in promoting S&D priorities critical for Nigeria, as reflected by the relevance of SDGs. This misalignment raises questions about the extent to which international development assistance meets Nigeria's specific needs and priorities.

In summary, while Nigeria aligns with S&D priorities in employment, education, and governance, significant gaps in health, energy, and infrastructure need addressing. Enhancing interventions in these areas and ensuring better coherence between national strategies and international assistance are vital for achieving sustainable and inclusive development.

Global Gateway – Nigeria

The Global Gateway initiative in Nigeria reflects a comprehensive approach towards supporting digitalization, renewable energy deployment, sustainable transportation, healthcare, and vocational education. The EU-Nigeria Digital Economy Package aims to bolster Nigeria's digitalization efforts through infrastructure upgrades, public service digitization, tech start-up support, digital skills training (with a focus on youth and women), and robust digital governance to ensure privacy and cybersecurity. Key Projects Include:

- EU-Nigeria Digital Economy Package: This initiative encompasses a wide range of interventions aimed at supporting Nigeria's digitalization journey. It includes infrastructure upgrades, digitization of public services, support for tech startups, digital skills training, and establishment of robust digital governance frameworks to ensure privacy and cybersecurity.
- Jigawa Solar Photovoltaic Project: The construction of a 50-100 MW public solar power plant in Gwiwa, Jigawa state, aims to de-risk the solar energy sector for private investment. This project includes the construction of evacuation lines, storage facilities, and provision of institutional technical assistance to facilitate renewable energy deployment in Nigeria.
- Lagos Inland Water Transport: This project focuses on the construction and upgrading of 6 priority routes, 25 terminals, and jetties in Lagos to promote the use of the Inland Water Transport system. It includes measures to enhance accessibility, safety (including anti-harassment campaigns), and comfort, particularly for women, the disabled, elderly, and children.
- MAV/Local Production of Vaccines and Medicines: Support is provided to strengthen the enabling environment for research and development, as well as local production of vaccines and medicines. This initiative aims to enhance Nigeria's healthcare capabilities and promote self-sufficiency in the production of essential pharmaceuticals and health technologies.
- Rehabilitation and Equipment of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Institutions: this project focuses on enhancing vocational education and training institutions in Benue, Plateau, and Oyo States. It includes the rehabilitation and equipment upgrade of 3 state agricultural colleges, 2 government technical colleges, and 3 agri-related vocational institutions. The project aims to improve training quality and employment transition, with a focus on empowering girls and women in the workforce.

These projects represent strategic investments aimed at advancing Nigeria's socio-economic development agenda. Financing for these initiatives is sourced from various partners, including the European Union, international financial institutions, and other stakeholders committed to supporting Nigeria's development objectives.

At a glance

- **Comprehensive yet Lacking Strategic Prioritization:** Nigeria's national development plan is broad and ambitious, covering a wide range of objectives. However, this extensive scope may not be strategically prioritized, which could impact the plan's effectiveness. This concern is supported by the analysis of alignment and perspective implementation scores.
- **Misalignment in GG Initiatives:** GG initiatives in Nigeria may fall short of effectively promoting critical S&D priorities, as indicated by their misalignment with SDGs data. This issue underscores the necessity for a closer alignment of international development assistance with Nigeria's specific requirements, as the data analysis suggests.
- **Questions on Efficacy and Funding Adequacy:** While the AAP projects in Nigeria are targeted and specific, some do not align directly with S&D priorities, leading to doubts about their impact. Additionally, there are concerns about whether financial resources are adequate to tackle significant challenges such as governance and education. These issues are reflected in the analysis of alignment and perspective implementation scores.
- **Discrepancies in EU Aid Allocation:** Despite the critical roles of poverty alleviation and infrastructure development, EU aid does not sufficiently support these areas in Nigeria, contrasting sharply with significant funding for education, employment, and governance initiatives. This discrepancy in aid distribution is apparent in the data analysis concerning alignment with S&D priorities.
- **Varied Approaches between AAPs and GG Initiatives:** The AAPs in Nigeria predominantly focus on education and employment, whereas GG initiatives target health, education, and energy sectors. This variance denotes diverse methods in addressing socio-economic challenges, as shown in the data analysis of alignment with S&D priorities.
- **Absence of Direct Actions in Priority Sectors:** Notably, despite being identified as priority areas in the MIP, the energy and health sectors lack direct actions in the 2021 and 2022 AAPs. This omission prompts concerns about the strategic alignment and coherence between Nigeria's national strategies and international development assistance, as indicated in the data analysis.

Insights – Nigeria²¹























Nigeria grapples with significant infrastructure challenges, such as inadequate transportation networks, unreliable power supplies, and deficient water and sanitation systems. Addressing these issues necessitates a comprehensive strategy that encompasses infrastructure development investment, regulatory reforms to engage the private sector, and the use of technology for efficient service delivery. It's equally important to implement robust maintenance strategies to ensure the long-term sustainability of infrastructure projects and to enhance their contribution to economic growth and living standards.

The effective execution of Nigeria's Action Plans faces various barriers, including bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, and a lack of institutional capacity. These challenges impede efforts to meet EU priorities, especially in terms of poverty alleviation and providing essential services. To surmount these hurdles and improve the implementation of Action Plans, it's vital to strengthen governance structures, enhance transparency and accountability, and encourage better coordination among government entities and stakeholders.

Several initiatives within Nigeria's Action Plans have proven effective in promoting EU priorities. Projects targeting education, healthcare, and renewable energy, in particular, have shown significant progress in mitigating poverty and enhancing access to crucial services. Their success can be attributed to factors such as strong political commitment, active engagement with stakeholders, and efficient monitoring and evaluation systems. Moreover, forming strategic partnerships with international organizations and civil society groups has amplified the impact of these initiatives, fostering knowledge exchange and capacity building.

²¹ In particular, we thank Mu'azu Muhammad, Senior Program Officer, Results for Development, Nigeria.

Tab. 5 – External and Internal Coherence Analysis for Nigeria’s AAPs by S&D Group’s Progressive Priority

	Action Plan				MIP	National Development Plan	Global Getaways	SDGs	
	2021		2022					Importance	Progress
	Alignment	Perspective Implementation	Alignment	Perspective Implementation					
(i) Poverty: economic poverty, social protection, access to social services, tenure rights.	3		2		3	4	3	4	⇒
(ii) Health: nutrition, diseases, mortality, reproduction, access to health services, environment.	1		2		4	3	4	3	⇒
(iii) Gender equality: non-discrimination, gender violence, child marriage, genital mutilation, unpaid domestic work, women empowerment, reproduction, tenure rights.	3		3		3	3	3	2	⇒
(iv) Education: primary education, other levels of education, education participation, education effectiveness.	1		5		4	4	5	3	n/a
(v) Water & sanitation: drinking water, sanitation.	0		2		1	5	4	1	⇒
(vi) Energy: access to energy services.	1		0		5	5	5	2	⇒
(vii) Employment: informal employment, earnings, unemployment, child labour.	4		4		3	5	3	5	⇒
(viii) Infrastructure: roads, connectivity.	0		0		2	5	2	4	⇒
(ix) Housing and cities: housing, public transport, safety.	0		1		1	5	1	3	⇒
(x) Technology: connectivity.	1		2		5	5	2	4	⇒
(xi) Governance: inclusive decision-making	5		1		5	5	2	4	⇒

5.6 Senegal

Senegal's development framework ambitiously aims to tackle major challenges, emphasizing poverty reduction, health, gender equality, education, and infrastructure development. Yet, ensuring coherence between national strategies and EU aid initiatives, especially in tackling systemic inequalities for inclusive development, presents challenges.

The coherence analysis aligns the Multiannual Development Support Framework (*Document de Stratégie Conjointe*, DSC) 2018-2023 with the NDICI – Global Europe for 2021-2027, providing a framework for evaluating EU development cooperation in Senegal. The DSC, taking over the EU MIP for Senegal for the initial phase of NDICI-GE (2021-2024), allocates about 1.3 billion euros, with a specific EU contribution of 222 million euros from 2021 to 2024.

The DSC's specific objectives, grouped into priorities and sectors, integrate with the thematic focuses of the NDICI. Centered on three main priorities, the DSC's structure aims at enhancing infrastructure, investing in human capital, and improving governance, mirroring Senegal's National Emerging Strategy (*Plan Sénégal Emergent*, PSE). All objectives of the DSC, directly or indirectly, aim at poverty alleviation, resonating with the NDICI's main objective.

Furthermore, the DSC emphasizes democratization and sustainable development, aligning with NDICI's second and third objectives. While not directly prioritized, the NDICI's fourth objective (Reducing irregular migration) is implicitly addressed in efforts to empower youth and improve living conditions to mitigate migration pressures, particularly in addressing environmental challenges and areas prone to forced displacement, such as coastal regions and Casamance.

Despite a comprehensive plan outlined in the DSC, a significant portion of its objectives are not directly addressed in the AAPs, particularly in areas like "Green and inclusive growth for job creation" and "Good governance", indicating potential gaps in alignment.

The examination of Senegal's DSC through the 11 S&D priorities reveals a broad plan but points out significant shortcomings, notably in inequality reduction and access to essential services. The emphasis is heavily on economic development, with insufficient measures for wealth distribution and broadening access to healthcare services.

Employment strategies mainly focus on economic growth with limited attention to workers' rights and conditions. While gender issues receive attention, critical interventions on family law reform and land access are absent. Gaps in equitable access to energy, water services, and decent housing for disadvantaged groups are also identified.

The PSE lacks specific details on actions and resources for implementation, especially regarding employment strategies and social objectives. It highlights governance issues but misses clear mechanisms for inclusive decision-making.

Moreover, essential SDGs corresponding to basic needs like water and energy receive lower emphasis, with persistent gender disparities underscoring contentious issues in Senegal's development approach.

In conclusion, while Senegal's development frameworks are ambitious, greater specificity and targeted actions are needed to effectively tackle systemic inequalities and promote sustainable,

inclusive development. Addressing inequality, ensuring equitable access to essential services, promoting decent jobs, and enhancing gender equality are crucial areas that require structured, root-cause-focused efforts.

Global Gateway – Senegal

According to the website <https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu>, Senegal is among the main beneficiaries of the regional project for the construction of the Praia-Dakar-Abidjan West Africa Strategic Transport Corridor along with seven other flagship projects of the Global Gateway initiative. Some of the flagship projects are also included among the actions presented by the *documents d'actions* that make up the AAPs analyzed in this chapter.

The mentioned projects have differentiated thematic focuses.

In addition to the regional project which finances the development of one of the 11 strategic corridors promoted by European cooperation in partnership with the African Development Bank (AfDB), three other projects focus on the development of transport: the upgrade and operation of the port of Ziguinchor and the two initiatives to improve mobility services in the Dakar area which include the development of the electric Bus Rapid Transit system and of the Dakar Bus Public Transport Network.

In the energy sector, the EU participates in the International Partners Group (IPG), which includes France, Germany, UK and Canada and finances the Just Energy Transition Partnership in Senegal. The Partnerships aims at increasing the share of renewable energies in installed capacity to 40% of Senegal electricity mix by 2030 by mobilizing 2 billion euros of additional new financing over an initial period of 3 to 5 years.

The projects focused on environmental sustainability include the wastewater treatment plant and the pre-treatment of the waste from the most polluting industries along the Hann Bay (Dakar), the *Projet d'Appui régional à l'Initiative pour l'Irrigation au Sahel* (PARIIS) and the rural development program *Programme d'appui au Développement Agricole et à l'entreprenariat Rural II* (PADAER II) which address the issue of sustainable rural development and the fight against poverty in vulnerable areas.

The Team Europe Initiative (TEI) on Manufacturing and Access to Vaccines, Medicines and Health Technologies ('MAV+') that works with African partners to strengthen their local pharmaceutical systems and manufacturing capacity is also among the projects financed under the Global Gateway.

At a glance

Senegal's alignment with S&D priorities is commendable, especially in areas such as poverty reduction and infrastructure development. Nonetheless, there are significant gaps, notably in gender equality and access to essential services. Addressing these challenges through targeted interventions and improved coherence between national strategies and EU aid initiatives could better align European strategies with S&D priorities.

- **Comprehensive Plan with Limitations:** Senegal's Development Support Framework (DSC) aligns with the 11 S&D priorities, showcasing a broad approach to tackling major issues. However, the plan falls short in addressing wealth distribution and providing access to essential services, which are hindered by resource allocation constraints. This limitation is evident in the analysis of the table data regarding alignment with S&D priorities.
- **Dependency on Local Economic Development for Poverty Reduction:** Poverty reduction efforts in Senegal depend heavily on local economic development, with insufficient emphasis on direct income distribution strategies. This trend, highlighted by the analysis of logical framework data, shows economic development being prioritized over direct poverty alleviation measures.
- **Focus on Sector Modernization in Employment Strategies:** Employment strategies in Senegal predominantly adopt trickle-down economics, focusing on sector modernization and business growth rather than directly enhancing labor rights. This approach is reflected in the analysis, indicating a shortfall in labor rights initiatives.
- **Gender Equality Challenges and Service Access Inequality:** While gender equality receives attention, critical issues such as disparities in family law and land access are overlooked. Inequalities in access to services, especially in the energy and water sectors, remain unresolved. This finding is corroborated by the analysis, underscoring the need for more focused interventions in these areas.
- **Infrastructure Focus with Indirect Poverty Impact:** Infrastructure-centric projects, primarily from Global Gateway initiatives, indirectly contribute to poverty reduction and support S&D priorities like transport and energy.
- **Lack of Specificity in Strategic Planning:** The examination of Senegal's PSE exposes a general lack of detail in outlining actions and resources necessary for achieving objectives. This issue, also present in the DSC and AAPs, underscores the need for more specific and targeted planning, as indicated in the analysis of alignment with S&D priorities.
- **Focus on Economic Growth for Employment Improvement:** Employment improvement strategies in Senegal rely largely on economic growth, with insufficient detail on improving salary levels, working conditions, and workers' rights. This oversight aligns with the analysis, revealing a lack of comprehensive labor rights measures.
- **Unclear Gender Objectives and Governance Mechanisms:** The definition of gender objectives and governance mechanisms in Senegal lacks clarity, especially regarding implementation processes for issues like family law reform and tenure rights. Similarly, while

governance objectives mention decentralization, they fail to detail inclusive decision-making processes. This lack of clarity is evident in the analysis of alignment with S&D priorities.

- **Limited Emphasis on Basic Needs in Strategic Documents:** The prioritization of SDGs in Senegal's strategic documents shows limited focus on fulfilling basic needs such as water and energy, highlighting gender as a significant issue in Senegal's development agenda. This observation aligns with the analysis, pointing to gaps in addressing essential needs and promoting gender equality.

Insights – Senegal²²

Both experts consulted confirmed the importance of conducting planning activities in close collaboration with national partners. This collaborative process significantly influences strategic decisions and the prioritization of thematic areas, especially in annual planning.

Therefore, the definition of programmatic documents is guided by strict adherence to the strategies outlined in the national development plan, as well as by assessments of feasibility, contextual conditions, and appropriate timing. These assessments are conducted with the participation of all partners involved in the individual actions, including ministries and government agencies.

The discrepancies between the objectives of the MIP and the themes addressed in the AAPs can largely be attributed to the outcomes of this planning process.

Regarding the analysis of the documents, which pointed out the lack of evidence for actions targeting particularly vulnerable and marginalized population segments, it was noted that this is partly a result of allocative decisions made in response to the COVID-19 emergency. Considerations regarding the necessity to enhance Africa's response capabilities led to reallocating resources from social and health interventions to strategic investments. These investments aim to provide the country with autonomous epidemic response capabilities, ensured through the development of a vaccine production industry.

It was also confirmed that contextual analyses form the foundation for many programmatic decisions on complex topics. This includes issues like the protection of workers' rights, enhancing the operational capacity for labor organizations, and reforms in family law, as well as regulations concerning inheritance and tenure rights. In both scenarios, the feedback highlighted the necessity of proceeding gradually, beginning with the development of opinion movements and local civil society engagement in these areas.

²² In particular, we thank two EU co-operation key observers in Senegal.

Tab. 6 – External and Internal Coherence Analysis for Senegal’s AAPs by S&D Group’s Progressive Priority

	DSC	Action Plan			National Development	Global Getaways	SDGs	
		2021	2022	2023			Importance	Progress
(i) Poverty: economic poverty, social protection, access to social services, tenure rights.	4	1	4	4	5	5	3	➔
(ii) Health: nutrition, diseases, mortality, reproduction, access to health services, environment.	5	4	0	4	5	4	3	➔
(iii) Gender equality: non-discrimination, gender violence, child marriage, genital mutilation, unpaid domestic work, women empowerment, reproduction, tenure rights.	5	4	4	5	4	3	2	➔
(iv) Education: primary education, other levels of education, education participation, education effectiveness.	5	5	3	1	5	0	3	➔
(v) Water & sanitation: drinking water, sanitation.	5	0	0	4	5	5	1	➔
(vi) Energy: access to energy services.	5	0	0	0	1	5	1	➔
(vii) Employment: informal employment, earnings, unemployment, child labour.	4	5	5	4	3	4	5	➔
(viii) Infrastructure: roads, connectivity.	4	1	5	3	3	5	3	➔
(ix) Housing and cities: housing, public transport, safety.	4	0	5	0	3	0	4	➔
(x) Technology: connectivity.	5	0	0	5	0	0	3	➔
(xi) Governance: inclusive decision-making	5	4	0	5	4	0	4	➔

5.7 Comparing first level of synthetic profiling and qualitative country analysis of El Salvador, Jordan, Kenya, and Nigeria

This chapter offers a comparative analysis of findings from two levels of analysis across four countries: El Salvador, Jordan, Kenya, and Nigeria. The development cooperation of each country with the European Commission (EC) was scrutinized through two perspectives: a Level 1 Analysis, utilizing TM and ML techniques for a broad overview of EC funding allocation and focal areas over a specified period, and a Level 2 Analysis, employing qualitative methods for an in-depth examination of alignment with S&D priorities and implementation challenges. Notably, Senegal is excluded from this comparative study due to the Level 1 Analysis focusing on English language documents.

The Level 1 Analysis across the countries highlights key trends and shifts in EC funding, emphasizing the evolution of developmental priorities. In contrast, the Level 2 Analysis delves into the intricacies of national development contexts, uncovering discrepancies between national strategies and EU aid initiatives, including GG projects, and stresses the necessity for targeted interventions and enhanced coordination for sustainable development. This synthesis of analyses provides crucial insights into the coherence, alignment, and execution challenges within each country's development strategy and EU aid efforts.

i. El Salvador

Level 1 Analysis:

Over a three-year period, El Salvador's development engagements with the EC, supported by €31.6 million in funding, underscore a strategic commitment to areas such as gender equality, EU cooperation, awareness raising, and civil society engagement. Digital transformation and gender equality emerge as prioritized initiatives, showcasing a dedication to using technology for societal advancement and tackling gender disparities.

Level 2 Analysis:

El Salvador's development approach is multifaceted, focusing on poverty reduction, education, and governance. Contrary to typical AAPs, the 2022 AAP prioritizes strategic planning and technical support in line with the MIP. Governance and water and sanitation are identified as underrepresented priorities in EU aid, while technology, employment, and poverty receive significant attention, especially through the Global Gateways initiative.

The analysis of El Salvador's development landscape reveals a multifaceted approach to addressing socio-economic challenges, with a notable emphasis on poverty reduction, education, and governance. Unlike traditional AAPs, the 2022 AAP emphasizes strategic planning and technical support aligned with the MIP. Governance and water and sanitation emerge as the least addressed priorities across all EU aid channels, indicating challenges in effectively tackling these crucial issues. Conversely, technology, employment, and poverty receive substantial attention within the aid framework, particularly through the GG initiative.

Differences:

- **Discrepancies in alignment among various S&D priorities** highlight development planning and execution complexities. While the Level 1 Analysis underscores a commitment to gender equality and EU cooperation, Level 2 Analysis points to challenges in fully integrating gender equality and addressing governance and water and sanitation priorities effectively.
- **The deviation between AAPs and the MIP**, particularly with minimal education-related actions in AAPs, suggests a need for better alignment and coordination.
- **Challenges in water and sanitation** are identified in Level 2 Analysis, indicating development planning and implementation gaps.
- **The absence of a comprehensive national strategic plan** since 2019, raised in Level 2 Analysis, suggests challenges in addressing development priorities effectively.

Overall, the differences between level 1 and level 2 analyses for El Salvador highlight the complexities of development planning and execution, emphasizing the need for improved coherence, coordination, and strategic alignment between national strategies and international aid programs.

ii. Jordan

Level 1 Analysis:

Jordan's significant funding of €95 million from the EC in 2023 focuses on advancing "Quality Education", highlighting educational initiatives and addressing needs related to migration, displacement, and vulnerable groups. Implementation strategies, such as "Acceleration and Incubation" and "Training, Skill Enhancement, TVET" (Technical and Vocational Education and Training), illustrate a multifaceted approach to educational development and a commitment to inclusive growth.

Level 2 Analysis:

Jordan's development scenario shows a complex interplay between national priorities and EU interventions, with a notable focus on alleviating poverty, health, and education. Despite alignment with S&D priorities in certain sectors, gaps require attention for comprehensive development. EU interventions show moderate impacts on S&D priorities within health and education sectors, while infrastructure, water, and sanitation sectors receive substantial EU support. Concerns regarding gender equality also emerge, underscoring the need for specific interventions to address gender disparities effectively.

Differences:

- Although **there's notable alignment with Jordan's development priorities and EU aid**, gaps in intervention depth and specificity, particularly in poverty, health, and education, are evident.
- Despite high priorities, **poverty, health, and education receive moderate emphasis** in EU aid actions, indicating potential comprehensive sectoral addressing gaps.

- **EU initiatives robustly support infrastructure, water, and sanitation**, reflecting a focus on tangible results. Conversely, the energy sector's lack of support indicates a possible oversight.
- **Concerns about gender equality** highlight the need for specific interventions in this area.

In conclusion, while there's partial alignment with S&D priorities across various sectors in Jordan, there's significant potential for improving depth, sustainability, and inclusivity of interventions. Strengthening partnerships, enhancing coordination, and prioritizing long-term investments are vital for Jordan to address its development challenges and progress sustainably towards the SDGs.

iii. Kenya

Level 1 Analysis:

Over three years, Kenya has experienced a strategic shift in EC funding focus, moving through themes of economic development, poverty alleviation, and climate action. A notable emphasis was placed on economic development and governance in 2021, transitioning to poverty alleviation and infrastructure enhancement in 2022, and focusing on climate action and environmental conservation in 2023. Implementation strategies have varied, including value chain development, infrastructure construction, and training, showcasing a multi-dimensional approach to development.

Level 2 Analysis:

Kenya's development pathway is geared towards poverty reduction, gender equality, health, and education, with significant backing for employment, infrastructure, and housing initiatives. While there's clear alignment with S&D priorities, challenges in effective implementation and coherence between national strategies are observed. The 2022 AAP shows improved alignment, yet disparities with the National Development Plan underscore the need for enhanced coherence. Despite attention to priority areas, issues remain in water and sanitation, governance, and gender equality.

Differences:

- **Emphasis on Key Development Priorities:** Both analyses underscore Kenya's commitment to poverty reduction, gender equality, health, and education. Level 1 analysis foregrounds economic development, poverty alleviation, and climate action as evolving priorities over the three years. Conversely, Level 2 analysis offers a detailed view of these priorities, highlighting implementation challenges and strategy coherence, especially in water and sanitation, governance, and gender equality.
- **Alignment with S&D Priorities:** Level 1 analysis suggests a broad alignment with S&D priorities across sectors, with shifts towards addressing poverty alleviation, infrastructure, and climate action. However, Level 2 analysis points out the inconsistencies between AAPs and the National Development Plan, stressing the need for better coherence and synergy across national strategies to tackle development challenges effectively.
- **Role of GG Initiatives:** Both analyses recognize the supplementary role of GG initiatives in national development efforts. Level 2 analysis delves deeper into these initiatives' impacts,

especially in advancing S&D priorities and enhancing the efficacy of AAPs and local interventions.

- **Education as a Priority:** Education is highlighted as a focal point in Kenya's development agenda by both analyses, pointing to the necessity for specialized interventions and increased investment in educational infrastructure and quality. Level 2 analysis, however, underlines the challenges in comprehensively addressing educational goals, reflecting the complexity of education-related issues.
- **Addressing Gender Equality:** Both analyses identify gender equality as a priority; however, Level 2 analysis marks it as the least supported S&D priority in Kenya, emphasizing the urgent need for intensified efforts to achieve inclusive and sustainable development.

Overall, while the Level 1 analysis identifies a broad potential alignment with S&D priorities, the Level 2 analysis illuminates the challenges in converting strategic goals into tangible outcomes, especially concerning water and sanitation, governance, and gender equality. This detailed perspective from Level 2 analysis highlights the complexity of Kenya's development scenario and the critical need for focused interventions and enhanced coordination between national and EU strategies for sustainable progress.

iv. Nigeria

Level 1 Analysis:

This analysis offers a comprehensive overview of Nigeria's development cooperation with the EC over the three-year period from 2021 to 2023. It showcases the strategic allocation of funds, with a focus on various key areas such as governance, education, health, and gender equality each year, reflecting Nigeria's evolving development needs and priorities. This dynamic approach aims to address key challenges through implementation strategies like infrastructure construction, training, and advocacy, striving for sustainable progress in targeted areas. The analysis provides valuable insights into the overarching trends and shifts in EC funding allocation, highlighting the evolution of priorities over the specified timeframe.

Level 2 Analysis:

Delving deeper into Nigeria's development landscape, this analysis examines the alignment with progressive priorities and challenges in effective implementation. It pinpoints disparities between national priorities and EU aid initiatives, especially in sectors like health, water & sanitation, and gender equality. Despite significant alignment in some areas, existing discrepancies underscore the necessity for improved coherence between national strategies and international assistance. This nuanced understanding of Nigeria's development challenges emphasizes the need for targeted interventions and enhanced coordination to achieve sustainable and inclusive progress.

Differences:

- **Alignment with S&D Priorities:** The Level 1 analysis suggests potential alignment with S&D priorities through the focused allocation of funds to specific areas each year. Nonetheless, the Level 2 analysis uncovers gaps between national priorities and EU aid initiatives, notably in comprehensively addressing health, water & sanitation, and gender equality issues. This

indicates a need for greater harmony between national strategies and international aid to effectively tackle development challenges.

- **Role of Global Gateways Initiatives:** Although both analyses recognize the supportive role of Global Gateways initiatives in national efforts, the Level 2 analysis offers deeper insights into the impact of these initiatives, revealing a mismatch between Global Gateways projects and Nigeria's specific needs and priorities. This raises concerns about their congruence with S&D priorities.
- **Focus on Priority Areas:** Both levels of analysis acknowledge the critical nature of areas such as employment, infrastructure, and housing within Nigeria's development agenda. However, the Level 2 analysis points out difficulties in effectively addressing these areas, especially water and sanitation, education, governance, and gender equality, stressing the necessity for focused interventions and better coherence between national and EU strategies.

In summary, merging the insights from Level 1 and Level 2 analyses for Nigeria highlights the essential role of ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the coherence, alignment, and outcome-orientation of Nigeria's national development strategies alongside EU aid initiatives.

6. Conclusions

This study offers insights into the priorities and actions of the EC's development cooperation assistance to partner countries. It examines official documents published by the EC, particularly the AAPs, which detail various programs in partner countries, outlining their objectives, expected results, activities, and financial contributions.

In detail, the study analyzes 568 AAP documents published by the DG INTPA and the DG NEAR, covering interventions in 89 partner countries. These documents are categorized into 176 CIDs and 392 Annexes, with the latter providing more detailed information on activities conducted by the EC.

The analysis uncovers detailed information about the nature and priorities of the EC's development cooperation interventions, highlighting internal coherence across the documents and the alignment of priorities with progressive goals.

At first glance, focusing on the expected contribution of interventions toward SDGs, areas such as human development, reducing inequality, alleviating poverty, and gender equality, which align with progressive priorities, are prominent.

However, a closer examination of the actions undertaken in partner countries, through the frequency of specific keywords in key sections of the AAPs (Summary, Indicative Activities Sections, Objectives, and Expected Results), reveals a reduced emphasis on progressive priorities such as poverty eradication and human development (for instance, through actions that include social protection and broadly target economically vulnerable groups). While gender equality receives more attention, both in the share of projects that feature this issue as the main initiative and in budget allocation, its frequency is substantially lower than expected targets, and actions are mostly designed to target girls and women indirectly.

Overall, this observation highlights a potential discrepancy between the EC's perceived contributions to overall development goals and the actual, tangible outcomes, raising doubts about the effectiveness of development cooperation programs in promoting human development and reducing inequalities in partner countries, in line with EC's NDICI – Global Europe financing targets, specifically the 20% earmarked for human development and the importance of the cross-cutting issue of women's empowerment.

Furthermore, a significant number of projects (for example, those with 'education' as the main initiative area) primarily focus on capacity building and strategy development. Considering the EC's financial resources are limited compared to the needs of partner countries, focusing efforts on building the capacities of partner countries to implement effective development policies might be a cost-effective strategy. However, it is crucial to ensure these collaborative efforts are directed towards facilitating job opportunities, ensuring social inclusion, and advocating for environmental sustainability. Again, mechanisms must be in place to ensure these policies are designed and implemented to benefit larger sections of the populations, particularly the poorest and most socio-economically disadvantaged. Progressive initiatives demand targeted actions, detailed planning, and precise indicators that can accurately measure impact and progress on the most vulnerable. This is not currently practiced.

The nature of interventions, which often rely on the indirect effects – trickle-down – of economic growth, even when targeting poverty eradication, inequality reduction, gender equality or increased decent work, raises concerns for progressive priorities. It suggests that not only can these priorities be somewhat marginalized, but they are often formulated in economically conservative ways. Similarly, while promoting gender equality through Education and Skill Development is important, it is equally crucial to ensure these initiatives directly contribute to dismantling systemic barriers, enhancing women’s participation in the economy, and promoting gender-sensitive policies.

i. Limitations of the study

Although TM and ML techniques allow analyzing a large number of documents, some limitations emerged during the study:

1. **Diverse Sources Gathering Key Documents:** Various websites (from DG INTPA and DG NEAR) upload documents about development cooperation interventions. The multiplicity of websites and the diversity of links complicate an easy and automatic download procedure for the entire collection of documents.
2. **Document Format:** The documents can be downloaded in PDF format, which contains invisible layers, leading to errors in detection and extraction of document content. Additionally, documents such as AAP, Multiannual Action Plan (MAP), MIP, Support Measure (SuM), etc., while generally adopting a similar internal structure, exhibit frequent variations, both in the structure of the textual sections and in the structure of the tables.
3. **Language:** For some countries, the documents are not available in English, necessitating adjustments to the system of automatic reading functions. For this study, only documents in English were considered. It was also necessary to define a perimeter of document types sharing a similar structure, favoring AAPs as the main reference document.
4. **Study Focus:** The study concentrates on a sample of 176 action plans; therefore, results might be incomplete. Similarly, analyzing documentation through keywords might not capture the specificity of actions fully. However, it is emphasized that the current analysis aims to provide an overview of main tendencies, supplemented by qualitative in-depth analyses.

Additionally, the study focuses on information regarding objectives and activities. However, other data available in most documents could be used for this purpose: budget components (if standardized and made available in all documents), SDGs, DAC, and Rio indicators, etc. Extracting this set of information could, in the future, provide policymakers with even more detailed and relevant insights for assessing the EC's development cooperation policies and interventions.

ii. Recommendations

This extensive analysis equips S&D MEPs with detailed and well-founded information about the actions carried out by the EC in specific countries and concerning policy areas that are progressive priorities, as well as identifying emerging inconsistencies between expected impacts and actual actions. These findings could enable MEPs to propose solid enhancements not only regarding what themes require further strengthening but also on how to bolster the initiatives (financially and in terms of inputs and types of actions). This effort could lay the groundwork for future negotiations on NDICI – Global Europe and the subsequent EC’s agenda.

To reinforce progressive priorities, the S&D Group should:

- i. Review NDICI – Global Europe targets by specifying policy areas (e.g., in the field of education, whether pre-school, basic education, secondary or above), types of activities (such as training and infrastructure building), and beneficiaries intended to be prioritized, especially in relation to human development or gender equality. This aims to ensure actions directly contribute to expected progressive goals and SDGs and to prevent the achievement of primary progressive goals, such as poverty reduction or inequality reduction, from relying on conservative solutions (e.g., the trickle-down approach).
- ii. Promote greater coordination and synergies between policies and measures targeting economic growth or green transition, particularly infrastructures (with specific reference to GG) and human development, to maximize the social impact of these interventions. Economic growth and environmental sustainability are vital for long-term development, but without deliberate efforts to include social development, by addressing social equity, health, education, and poverty reduction, their benefits may be unevenly distributed. Strategies must ensure development is inclusive, balanced, and environmentally and socially sustainable actions, addressing the needs of the most vulnerable populations.
- iii. Introduce a new target in NDICI – Global Europe for poverty and inequality reduction, referencing the Inequality Marker: The development and adoption of the Inequality Marker have been significant achievements for progressives in the current legislature. The I-Marker ensures that poverty and inequality reduction are principal objectives of development cooperation, favoring projects that benefit the poorest and most vulnerable to a greater extent, including women. The EC should fully implement the I-Marker by allocating sufficient resources to conduct Distributional Impact Assessments (DIAs), as requested by the Council Conclusion. DIAs are crucial for planning programs that adequately target these groups, notably the poorest and women, and evaluate the social impact of development cooperation.
- iv. Partner with UN agencies, CSOs, and the media. It is vital for progressives to strengthen relations with key development cooperation actors since they can offer additional insights into the EC’s fieldwork. A permanent forum should be established for dialogue with these actors, including those from partner countries, as part of the S&D Group’s efforts to enhance transparency and data-driven policies.

- v. Establish a High-Level Panel on Poverty and Inequalities, comprising members from EU institutions (Council, European Parliament, Commission), experts, CSOs, and representatives from partner countries, to enrich dialogue on sustainable development and social impact of EC interventions.
- vi. Promote research. The current study, providing detailed information and data on the actions undertaken by the EC in partner countries, underscores the need for further studies (e.g., through an Annual Report of the European Parliament) utilizing TM and ML techniques and artificial intelligence, also at the European Parliament Secretariat level. This would enhance MEPs' knowledge and strengthen their role in scrutinizing the EC's work. Innovative solutions are needed to provide MEPs with detailed information promptly, for example, about interventions in specific partner countries or regions (before parliamentary debates or missions). However, this requires the EC to offer more harmonized and accessible sources for document review.

These proposals aim to ensure that European development cooperation effectively promotes key progressive priorities: social justice, sustainable development, reducing poverty and inequality. They also intend to increase the transparency of legislative work and the operations of the EC and stimulate informed dialogue involving external actors as a way to enhance the political legitimacy of development cooperation policies and the EU's geopolitical role in supporting partner countries.

Appendix

1. ML methodology

The IT tool developed for the study allows to download, read and analyze a large number of AAPs gathered in the EC DG INTPA and EC DG NEAR archive, in an automatic, fast and standardized way.

The tool is able to read the key elements of each document – text sections, tables, budget figures, SDGs – through ML and Artificial Intelligence algorithms, and to store them into an ordered archive. The collected data constitute the information basis for the coherence analysis and for the search engine system which will be illustrated in the following section.

The tool extract “labels” or “keywords” as key information contained in each document, outlining type of interventions, objectives and specific activities, along with budget figures through ML and Artificial Intelligence algorithms. This allows to make all documents immediately and uniformly comparable, on one or more investigation dimensions simultaneously. This key information is then transformed into data and analyzed, specifically to reveal the content of the document²³:

Moreover, the proposed classification allows to assess the coherence of the planning of the European Commission DG INTPA and DG NEAR with the progressive priorities.

In summary, the tool capable of:

1. Manage large quantities of documents in a standardized, fast and automated way
2. Retrieve specific information from a single document or a set of documents
3. Compare and aggregate data from multiple documents and to perform a statistical analysis on it
4. Perform customized searches on multiple levels of information in the set of documents

1.1 Countries Analyzed

Afghanistan, Angola, Armenia, Aruba, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Greenland, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Maldives, Mauritius, Moldova, Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Republic of Malawi, Republic of Rwanda, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

²³ A peculiar aspect of the presented workflow is the "3D labeling", that is the mapping on the three classification dimensions described above. Let us mention, without going into technical details, that the definition of the classes for the mapping (the lists of "labels" or keywords for the classification areas) is the result of an iterative refinement succession of ML and AI algorithms applications in parallel with manual validations of the obtained results. The underlying trade-off was the need to keep the number of labels limited but at the same time to cover a sufficiently broad and specific spectrum of categories to be able to classify the content of all scanned documents.

1.2 Analyzed Documents

- Number of countries analyzed: 89
- Number of resolutions: 176
- Number of documents: 568
- Types of resolutions: Annual Action Plan, Support Measure, Individual Measure
- Number of Commission Implementing Decisions: 176
- Number of Annexes: 392
- Period: 2021 – 2023
- Languages: English

1.3 Sources of Documentation

https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/action-plans_en

https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/countries_en

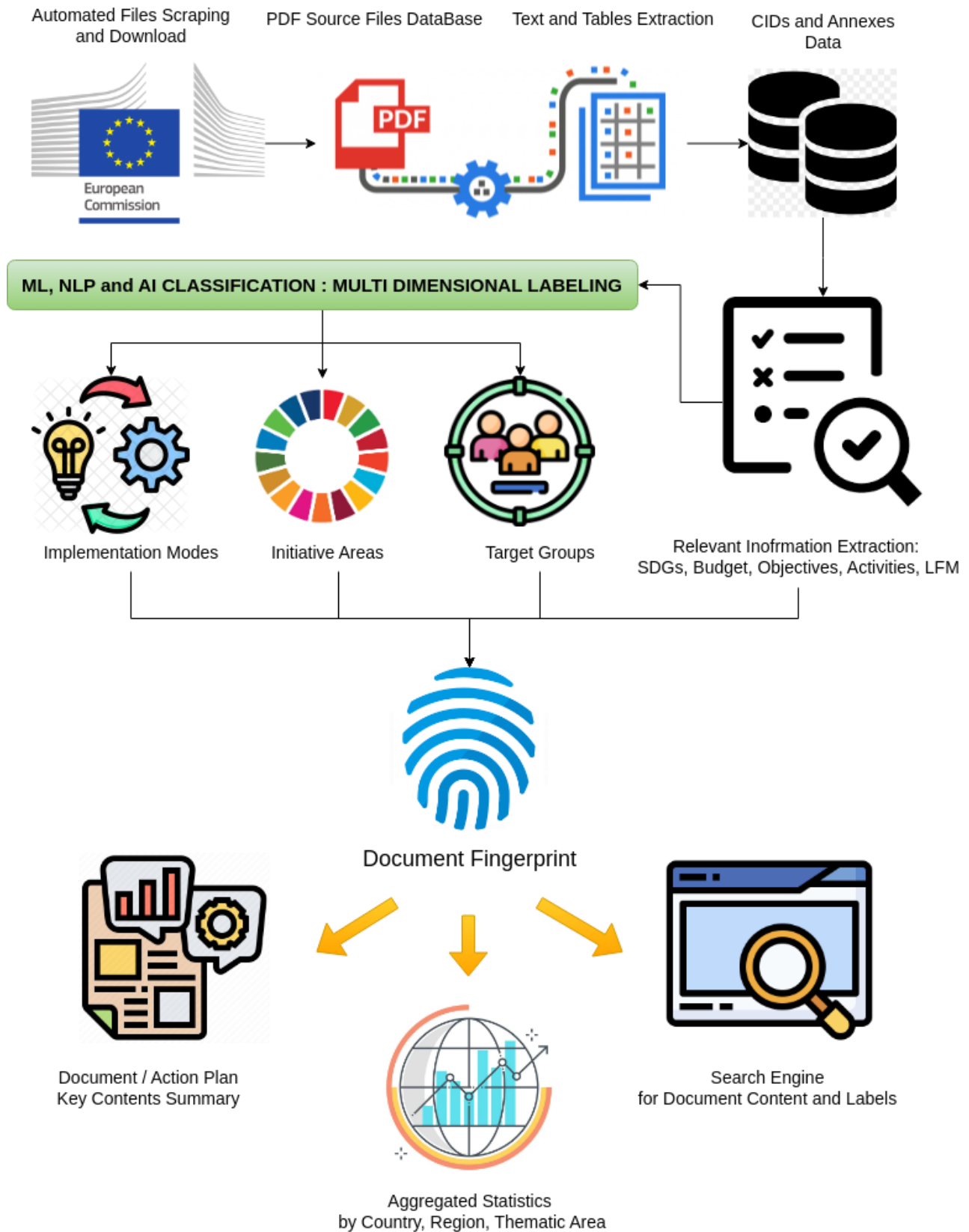
https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/countries_en

1.4 Source data

Tab. 1 - The textual sections and tables of the typical structure of the AAPs documents

AAPs	ANNEXES	CID
Text Sections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synopsis. • Rationale / Context • Objectives and Expected Outputs • Indicatives Activities • Risks and Lessons Learnt • Intervention Logic • Budget Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operative summary of the Plan • Articles 1 to 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Plan Structure ◦ EU Contribution ◦ Implementation ◦ Flexibility Clause
Tables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synopsis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Priority, Areas, ◦ SDGs, ◦ Targets, ◦ Markers DAC & Rio Markers ◦ Amounts Concerned • Risks and Lessons Learnt • Logical Framework Matrix • Indicative Budget 	None

Fig. 1 - Workflow of the documents processing



The processing flow is divided into several sequential steps:

1. Automatic download of PDF documents from EC webpages
2. Creation of a catalog of documents, sorted by identification coordinates: country, year, type of document, language.
3. Selection, detection and extraction (the so called “parsing” process), cleaning and harmonization of the relevant data of each document: SDGs, Budget, Objectives and Expected Outputs, Indicative Activities, Logical Framework Matrix (LFM) and others.
4. Creation of a structured database with the collected data.
5. Use of Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence algorithms for mapping on three dimensions of information, using labels and keywords:
 - a. Initiative Areas
 - b. Implementation Modes
 - c. Target Groups
6. Statistical analysis of data (direct and inferred) on a hierarchical scale of increasing aggregation levels:
 - a. Single Document
 - b. Single Plan
 - c. Single country
 - d. Geographic macro-region
 - e. Overall EU cooperation
7. Analysis with time series and/or aggregated statistical metrics

1.5 Analysis Results

Key metrics are quantitatively computed and expressed by a series of indicators (coherence indicators, trend indicators, critical issues list, etc.), which summarize the results of the analysis.

A Data Analysis environment suitable for the purposes of the study could be structured on the use of both the R/R-Studio environment and Python programming language (coupled with Jupyter Notebooks as analysis framework, with the use of the Pandas data analysis library and others specific to the needs of the analysis and optimized for the documents’ formats).

1.6 general considerations on the use of methodology

Initial Documents

Resolutions downloaded: 340 (total 916 documents, 115 countries)

Initial document distribution:

- AAP 674,
- MIP 79
- SM 76,
- AD 57,
- IM 30

Resolutions in French: 87 (total 250 documents, 22 countries)

A preliminary inspection of the reference web pages for the provisions that the European Commission produces on development cooperation made it possible to note the multiplicity of different types of resolutions available. Among them, the most recurring are: “Annual Action Plan” (AAP), “Multiannual Indicative Program” (MIP), “Addendum” representing “Amending Decision” (AD), “Individual Measure” (IM), “Support Measure” (SuM), “Special Measure” (SpM). Each type of resolution can be addressed to a single country, to a group of countries, to a large territorial entity such as sub-continental regions (Sub-Saharan Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, or others), or be referred to a specific programming theme, which may or may not have a corresponding territorial perimeter (see for example the so-called Global Challenges https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/publication/ndici-global-europe-%E2%80%98global-challenges%E2%80%99-thematic-programme-multi-annual-indicative_en).

Each type of resolution is characterized by an internal, specific and recurring structure. As an example, let’s take two types of provisions, Annual Action Plan (AAP) and “Amending Decision” (AD) and see their usual composition. The AAPs are composed of a summary document, called “Commission Implementing Decision” (CID), which contains the summary list of interventions planned by the Commission for the benefit of a specific country in a specific period. In addition, the AAP is normally equipped with detailed documents, called Annexes, equal in number to the interventions arranged in the CID, each of which describes the project framework inherent to the intervention and reports the budget indications and implementation logic.

The AD provisions instead serve to rectify decisions previously issued by the Commission, and can partially or entirely replace the documents to which they refer. They also consist of a CID and the corresponding Annexes, but they only report the parts requiring correction and may not share the same structure as the equivalent AAP documents.

The Commission’s provisions are published in English, with the exception of countries belonging to regions of French influence, for which the resolutions are drafted in French.

It seems clear that this multiplicity of resolutions translates into a consequential heterogeneity of documents, which can differ from each other in terms of structure, content and language, which require a corresponding specificity of algorithms to be interpreted and processed by an automated reading system. Designing a system that can handle the full spectrum of cases is beyond the scope of this study. We proceeded with the selection of a subgroup of resolutions and documents which were the most representative of the Commission’s action and which at the same time shared a sufficiently uniform formal structure to be able to be processed with the same automated reading system.

Selection of analysis documents

(i) Type of documents

As a starting point for defining the analysis perimeter, AAPs were chosen, i.e. the largely most frequent typology in the spectrum of Commission provisions. The typologies added later had to satisfy the criterion of high homogeneity with the AAP structure: the “Individual Measure”, “Support Measure” and “Special Measure” typology resolutions were selected. The “Amending Decision” (AD) documents, although not too different in the essential structure, require an ad hoc perfected

management system which not only deals with the extraction of data from the document but also with their management and possible replacement with information updated replacements, which is beyond the scope of this study.

(ii) Recipients or topics of the documents

In the initial phase, when the automatic reading functions of documents were developed on the basis of their structural characteristics, documents addressed to individual countries, groups of countries, regional and thematic in nature were examined. Part of the mid-term report was built starting from data from regional documents. However, in the phase of progressive extension of the scope of countries and documents covered under analysis, various types of problems have taken on ever greater weight:

- each type of document, as the number of documents grows, expresses an ever-increasing variability, which requires continuous revision and correction of the automatic reading functions or the definition of different reading systems for different types of documents
- the overlaps between national, regional or global interventions make the management of intervention overlaps very complex, and it is not always possible to harmonize macro-territorial data with those on individual countries
- documents from years well before the 2020s, taken as reference for the analysis, often present structures and sections different from the more recent ones
- documents in different languages require specific vocabularies for the identification of the relevant sections within the document and for the management of any linguistic variations, which are very frequent in all document components, such as titles, column headings, section titles and table of contents. document, etc.

For these reasons, we chose to consider in the analysis only the pool of documents addressed to individual countries and which were written in English.

Cautionary Notes in Interpreting Results

- Starting from the definition of the pool of documents under analysis, it is clear that the current study does not aim and does not finalize a management system for the entire spectrum of provisions of the European Commission regarding development aid, but presents an operational model of semi-automated analysis of a large part of the available documents.
- The data reading and extraction system can be defined as a semi-automated process, which includes the use of automatic functions for extracting information from source documents, combined with a manual component of control and management of unforeseen exceptions. The automatic functions are built with a modular and flexible architecture, they operate with sequential scanning steps at progressively greater granularity and specificity, in order to extract most of the information available on increasing levels of detail. Although most of the structural discrepancies between documents are managed automatically, it has been observed that a component of the differences between documents requires intervention and control by the operator who supervises the operation of the system.

- The information is extracted from the documents so as to be harmonized with each other, or expressed in similar formats: tabular, numerical, textual, depending on the nature of the data. However, this is not always possible on the entire spectrum of documents, because the data is missing, or expressed in a structurally different way. An example of this last case can be seen in the structural discrepancy in the tables relating to the budget: in some documents they show the subdivision by generic areas of expenditure, in other documents the separation into the different objectives of the project logic is reported. Such a substantial discrepancy forces the analysis to use only the overall budget data, leaving out the detail for each individual objective even where present.
- A further need for control was found to be necessary during the inspection of the final data, preliminary to the comparative and aggregate analysis. Some anomalies were observed, specifically in relation to the budget amount foreseen in some documents. The subsequent manual check made it possible to find that the reading system was able to identify some errors present in the texts of the documents: incorrect or incorrectly formatted values, incomplete or different information within the same document. While on the one hand this confirms the quality of the automated scanning system, on the other it once again underlines the multiplicity of possible and unpredictable causes of error, which aggravate the complexity of managing the system and reduce its degree of automation.
- The results presented cannot be interpreted as an exhaustive description of the Commission's overall multi-year work. They are rather a broad (albeit partial) overview of the potential of the automatic reading system of the developed system, which by necessity narrows the pool of source documents but which is capable of managing the essential information in a reliable and effective manner.
- It is underlined that the provisions of the European Commission covered in this analysis are annual or multi-annual programming documents that the Commission develops as part of its cooperation and development aid action planning. The interventions and expenditure items indicated are therefore to be understood as programmatic acts and commitments for actions to be implemented. An ex-post feedback on the actual degree of implementation of the planned activities and the achievement of the expected results would be necessary to validate the real realization of the programmatic initiatives examined here.

2. The complete list of ‘initiative areas’, ‘target groups’ and ‘implementation modes’

In order to define Progressive priority areas, we used SDGs, Targets and Indicators as the main and most comprehensive international standard for development measurement, and identified among them, those that might be considered more directly and explicitly as priorities for progressives, because a) enable to reduce inequalities and b) promotion human development. Accordingly, 71 SDG indicators were identified as priorities for progressives, and transformed into descriptors and keywords for the machine learning analysis:

(bold labels are directly and explicitly linked to progressive priorities)

‘Initiative Areas’

1. Agriculture
2. Banks and Financing Programs
3. Biodiversity and Environmental Protection
- 4. Climate Change**
5. Companies and Industries
6. Culture and Artistic Heritage
- 7. Democracy and Electoral Processes**
8. Digital Transition
9. EU Cooperation and Promotion
- 10. Education, School and University**
11. Emergency and Disasters
12. Energy
- 13. Farmers and Smallholders**
- 14. Food Security**
15. Forestry
- 16. Gender Equality**
17. Government and Institutions
- 18. Health and Sanitation**
- 19. Human Rights**
- 20. Job and Employment**
- 21. Justice**
22. Legislation and Regulation
23. MSMEs, SMEs
24. Manufacturing
- 25. Migrations, Displaced People, Refugees**
26. Natural Resources Management
- 27. Peace and Conflicts**
- 28. Poverty**
- 29. Rural Development**
- 30. Social Protection and Inclusion**

- 31. Tourism
- 32. Trade
- 33. Urban Development**
- 34. Waste Management**
- 35. Water Management**

'Target Groups'

- 1. Banks and Financial Institutes
- 2. CSOs, Civil Society Organizations**
- 3. Companies and Industries
- 4. EU Delegation
- 5. Farmers and Smallholders**
- 6. Girls and Women**
- 7. Government, Ministers and Public Institutions
- 8. Households and Families**
- 9. Judges and Judiciary
- 10. Local Communities**
- 11. Local Governments and Authorities
- 12. MSMEs and SMEs
- 13. Migrants and Refugees**
- 14. NGOs**
- 15. People with disabilities**
- 16. Political Parties
- 17. Private Sector
- 18. Students, Teachers and Schools
- 19. Trade Unions**
- 20. University, Academics and Think Tanks
- 21. Vulnerable People**
- 22. Workers Cooperatives**
- 23. Youth and Children**

'Implementation Modes'

1. Acceleration and Incubation
2. Awareness Raising, Advocacy, Campaigning
3. Business Strategy Development
4. Certification Procedures
5. Communication Strategy Development
6. Data Collection and Analysis
7. Dialogue Facilitation
8. Digital Systems and Platform
9. Exchange Programs
10. Expert Exchanges
11. Finance Access Improvement
12. Financing Programme
13. Health Services Integration
14. ICT solutions, Software, Cybersecurity
15. Infrastructure Construction or Rehabilitation
16. Legal Counselling
17. Logistic, Coordination, Management Support
18. Mapping, Study and Research
19. Market Access Improvement
20. Market Analysis and Sector Analysis
21. Mental Health/Psycho-social Support
22. Needs Assessment
23. Networking and Partnerships
24. Regulation Framework Development
25. Risk Assessment
26. Scholarships, Fellowships
27. Social Media Management
28. Technical Assistance
29. Technology Transfer
30. Training, Skill Enhancement, TVET
31. Value Chain Development
32. Visibility Support
33. Workshops, Seminars, Events, Webinars, Panels

3. Qualitative analysis methodology

The table comprises 12 columns. The first column lists the 11 S&D progressive priorities and their subcategories. The subsequent six columns (2-7) provide an analysis of two AAPs for 2021, 2022 and 2023, with two columns for each AAP, that is:

- Alignment (2nd, 4th and 6th column): Reflects the level at which the AAP serves the respective S&D priority, based on a qualitative analysis conducted by an expert.
- Perspective Implementation (3rd, 5th and 7th column): Estimates the likelihood of implementing actions to improve the respective S&D priority, primarily based on allocated financial resources (subchapter “4.5 Indicative Budget”).

The next three columns (8th - 10th) pertain to the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027 (MIP), the Global Gateways initiative, and the National Development Plan. Each column contains a single entry for each S&D priority, indicating the level at which each document serves the respective S&D priority, based on a qualitative analysis conducted by an expert.

The final two columns (11th and 12th) establish connections between S&D priorities and the SDGs for the country under analysis. The first column in the SDGs section denotes the significance of SDGs in addressing the respective S&D priority. This assessment is based on country-specific reports and UNDP’s Integrated SDG Insights. Specifically, we utilized information regarding the “priorities” and “interlinkages” to gauge importance from the country’s perspective. The second column reflects the progress achieved in each S&D priority, based on the relative progress of the corresponding SDGs as indicated in the latest Sustainable Development Report.

However, in some countries, not all columns have been included in the table due to missing data, such as the absence of Annual Action Plans (AAPs) for all three years. In such cases, the respective columns have been omitted.

In the AAPs alignment, MIP, National Development Plan, Global Gateways, and SDGs Importance columns, values range from 0 (indicated by a red background colour) to 5 (indicated by a green background colour). These values signify:

- “0” indicates that the respective S&D priority is not affected or may have a negative impact.
- “1” indicates that the analysed document(s) foresee action(s) with an indirect positive outcome on at least one (but not on all) subcategory of the respective S&D priority.
- “2” indicates that the analysed document(s) foresee action(s) with an indirect positive outcome on all subcategories of the respective S&D priority.
- “3” indicates that the analysed document(s) anticipate action(s) with a direct positive outcome on at least one subcategory of the respective S&D priority, while indirect positive outcomes extend to none, one, or multiple but not all subcategories of the respective S&D priority.
- “4” indicates that the analysed document(s) anticipate action(s) with a direct positive outcome on at least one subcategory and an indirect positive outcome on all subcategories of the respective S&D priority.
- “5” indicates that the analysed document(s) foresee action(s) with a direct positive outcome on all subcategories of the respective S&D priority.

In the “Perspective Implementation columns (3rd, 5th and 7th) values are represented by a rating of up to four bars, with each bar representing a 25% probability. If 2 bars are coloured, the probability is greater than 50% but less than 75%. The values in the “Perspective Implementation” columns are determined by two key factors: a) the budget allocated to the relevant project(s) - those anticipated to influence the respective S&D priority, and b) the anticipated impact of project implementation on the specified S&D priority (AAPs alignment column located to the left of the “Perspective Implementation” column). The probability itself is calculated as a combination of two components: two-thirds (2/3) of the budget assigned to the specific project and the rating derived from the AAPs alignment analysis.

Finally, in the SDG/Progress column (12th), the progress of the S&D priority in terms of the progress of the respective SDG goal is indicated by arrows.